MATER CHRISTI

MEDITATIONS ON OUR LADY

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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MEDITATIONS ON OUR LADY

BY

MOTHER ST. PAUL

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AUTHOR OF "SPONSA CHRISTI," "PASSIO CHRISTI," ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY

REV. JOSEPH RICKABY, S.J.

Mater Christi, ora pro nobis

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PREFACE

Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day, the same also for ever. (Heb. xiii. 8.) His salvation extends to all generations. *My salvation shall endure for ever, and My righteousness shall not fail.* (Isaias li. 6.) Also He says: *My words shall not pass away.* (Matt. xxiv. 35.) He is the Teacher of all times, and that as well by His actions as by His words, by what He said and by what He did. It was His *to do and to teach.* (Acts i. 1.) It is ours, ours in this twentieth century, to listen to what He says, and to mark what He does. It is ours to hear Him and to see Him, spiritually. That we do by reading of His gospel, by listening to sermons, and very particularly by meditation, or by what St Ignatius calls "contemplation" of the mysteries of His life. To "contemplate" in the Ignatian sense is to make yourself present at some scene of our Saviour's life and behold it all, as it were, re-enacted before your eyes. It is the process called in modern philosophy "visualisation." These Meditations are composed on the Ignatian plan of *visualising* what Our Lord did, said, and suffered. *Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.* (Luke xi. 28.) Blessed are they who take pains thus to *hear* what their Saviour *says*, to *contemplate* and *visualise* what He *does*. They are the persons most likely, with Mary, to *keep all these words in their heart* (Luke ii. 51), and in their measure to fulfil the teaching of the *Teacher of all nations.* (Matt. xxviii. 19.)

JOSEPH RICKABY, S.J.

20th October 1918.

Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata

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MATER CHRISTI

PRAYERS

Before Meditation

O Holy Ghost, give me a great devotion and a great attraction towards Mary, Thy spouse; a great support in her maternal bosom, and an abiding refuge in her mercy; so that in her and by her Thou mayest form in me JESUS Christ.

(Blessed Grignon de Montfort.)

Memorare, O piissima Virgo Maria, non esse auditum a sæculo, quemquam ad tua currentem præsidia, tua implorantem auxilia, tua petentem suffragia, esse derelictum. Ego, tali animatus confidentia, ad te Virgo virginum, Mater, curro. Ad te venio; coram te gemens peccator assisto. Noli, Mater Verbi, verba mea despicere; sed audi propitia et exaudi. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

(300 days, each time.)

After Meditation

My Queen and my Mother, to thee I offer myself without reserve; and to give thee a mark of my devotion, I consecrate to thee during this day, my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, and my whole person. Since then I belong to thee, O my good Mother, preserve and defend me, as thy property and possession. Amen.

(*100 days, once a day, if said morning and evening.*)

Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix! nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris, sed a periculis cunctis, libera nos semper Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of GOD. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Immaculate!

"*Thy Holy Tabernacle which Thou hast prepared from the beginning.*" (Wisdom ix. 8.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture or medal of the Immaculate Conception.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to understand.

Point I.—THE PREPARATION OF THE TABERNACLE

Why should Mary be called a Tabernacle? She tells us herself—for the Church applies these words to Mary: "He that created me rested in my tabernacle." (Ecclus. xxiv. 12.) He sojourned there for a time Who "was made flesh and dwelt (*tabernacled* the Greek word means) among us." When did GOD begin to prepare His Tabernacle? Was it on the day of the Holy and Immaculate Conception? Was it when He spoke to our first parents

of "the seed of the woman"? Was it just before the War in Heaven, when He revealed His plans to the first creatures of His Hands? Long, long before! "From the beginning," the Holy Tabernacle was being prepared. And *He* says this, Who had no beginning, with Whom is "neither beginning of days nor end of life," (Heb. vii. 3), Who says of Himself: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." (Apoc. i. 8.) From all Eternity, then, the Holy Tabernacle was being prepared in the mind of GOD.

What care GOD took in the preparation of Mary, because she was to be the Mother of His Son! And what care He takes in His preparation of me! I, too, have always been in the mind of GOD. "From the beginning" He has prepared me to fulfil the end for which He created me. Here on earth we are very careful about the training of those who are destined to fill certain offices, and the higher the office the more careful the training. How carefully are princes of royal blood trained! How careful is the preparation of a Priest, of a Religious! But GOD has been at work at the preparation long before we begin ours, and He is training for a most important office, namely, the salvation of the soul—the end for which He created every single child of Adam. All the chequered picture of the life of GOD'S child forms a part of His preparation—all the ups and downs, and windings and turnings, and things that seemed at the time, perhaps, so useless. Mistakes and failures—even sin itself, He can, by means of the contrition which it causes, turn to good account, as He did in the cases of St Mary Magdalen, of St Peter, and of innumerable others. He knows how to bring good out of evil, and to make all work together for good to those who love Him.

What have I got to do, then, in the matter? Do as Mary did, prove my love to Him by *co-operation* in His plans for me. There must be no complaint about what He arranges. Faith must be strong enough to believe

that, not only now in the present, all things are working together to enable me to fulfil the end for which GOD created me; but that in the past, too—that past which I so often allow to disturb my peace—GOD was working, and preparing me step by step for what He intended me to be. It is want of faith, really, which is often at the bottom of all my problems and difficulties. I will not believe that He forgives and forgets and brings good out of the evil. This it is which interferes in GOD'S preparation of me, and makes me unfit for the work for which He has so patiently been preparing me. Let me think to-day of Mary's perfect co-operation, and ask her to obtain for me more faith and more love.

Point II.—THE HOLY TABERNACLE

What was it? A human body and soul specially prepared by GOD to be the Tabernacle where His Son should rest—a body, we may well believe, more than usually beautiful, for that body from which He that was "fairer than the sons of men" was to take flesh, must needs be fair too. "Thou art *all* fair." But it was the *soul* which made the Tabernacle holy. Here the preparation had been special and unique. Mary's soul had a beauty all its own, for neither original sin nor any of its effects had ever touched it. Not only was it sinless, as my soul was after Baptism, but, instead of being prone to evil, it was upright, and ever aspiring after good. Never once was there a wilful imperfection in Mary's soul. It is probable, too, that her understanding was enlightened, and that she had the full use of reason from the moment of her Conception, that is, from the moment when her body and soul were joined together. In her will there was no weakness, it was in perfect conformity with GOD'S Will; and in her heart there was no concupiscence. Her body, too, shared in this wondrous liberty, for it knew neither sickness nor corruption.

But are we not making Mary almost equal with her Son? No, for the gulf between them is that between the Creator and the creature. Could any gulf be wider? Her Son was GOD, and was impeccable *by nature.* Mary was impeccable *by grace.* Mary was sinless because GOD her Creator chose to make her so, so that at the moment of her conception He was able to say: "Thou art all fair—there is no spot in thee."

Such was "the Holy Tabernacle prepared from the beginning."

And Mary is my model! Does it seem impossible? Does it almost weary me to have such perfection given me to copy? Let me answer my question by another: *Could* GOD do otherwise? Would it be worthy of Himself if He were to give me anything less than a *perfect* copy? If for our pupils, who are studying merely things of time, we seek ever the best models, can we expect GOD, Who is training for eternity, to give His pupils a copy that is less than perfect? And the task need not discourage us. GOD is not a hard master expecting to reap where He has not sown. He does not expect more than He has given; He does not expect perfection; but He does expect generous efforts. He does expect fidelity, and correspondence to the grace He has given. It was her constant perseverance in these virtues which kept Mary always full of grace and pleasing to GOD, not the privilege of her Immaculate Conception.

"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Pray that I, who with all a child's love and admiration desire to copy my Mother, may never be discouraged, but may go on, ever aiming at perfection, and never surprised at the want of it; full of faults and failings always, but full, too, of love and confidence and conformity to GOD's Will. So shall I one day, with my Mother's prayers and help, be presented "spotless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

Colloquy. "O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception of a Virgin didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son, we beseech Thee that Thou, Who through the foreseen death of Thy same Son didst preserve her from all stain of sin, wouldst grant also to us through her intercession to come pure to Thee." (*Collect for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.*)

Resolution. To strive to copy my model.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Be diligent, that ye may be found undefiled and unspotted to Him in peace." (2 Peter iii. 14.)

Mary's Birthday

"*In me is all grace.*" (Ecclus. xxiv. 25.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture of Our Lady's Nativity. St Anne is holding up her babe, just swaddled, and offering it to God; the nurse is waiting to put the little one in its cradle. St Joachim is coming into the room. A Dove is hovering over the babe's head. Angels are looking on.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to look on with the Angels, and try to understand.

Point I.—The Angels

What does it all mean? Why are the Angels so full of interest? Was the birth of this little one so different from any other? It was indeed miraculous, but Joachim and Anne were by no means the only ones thus favoured. No, there is something beyond this which is engaging the interest of the Angels. They see in this little babe, whom Anne is offering to God, a sight to make them wonder and adore—they see a soul which has never been touched by original sin. They had seen Adam created in grace; they had seen Jeremias, and later would see John Baptist, both spotless from their birth, but spotless because they had been *cleansed* from original sin before birth. In these

souls, however, they saw no more than they see in each little soul as it leaves the baptismal font, grace having taken the place of original sin. But in Mary they see a sight which they have never seen before—a soul whose sanctity surpasses that of angels and of men, a soul which will glorify GOD more perfectly than any other creature ever has done, or will do. No wonder the Angels are lost in admiration!

They have known about the Incarnation ever since the War in Heaven; now they see one of the steps by which it was to be accomplished. They see the "tabernacle prepared," and at its side they will never cease to wonder and praise GOD, as long as that pure soul stays in this land of exile.

Point II.—THE BABE

Mary was born with an end to fulfil, just as I was. She was created to praise, reverence, and serve GOD, just as I was; created to save her soul, just as I was. And because of her absolute purity, she understood her end perfectly from the first moment of her existence, and followed it always without swerving. While her mother was offering her to GOD, she, with the full use of her reason (as many hold) offered herself to fulfil the end for which she had been created. She did not know what the *particular* end was to be — GOD did not reveal to her till the day of the Incarnation, that she was to be the Mother of GOD—but she offered herself to do what GOD wished, she put herself at His disposal.

And this is what I must do every day of my life if I would fulfil the end for which GOD has created me. Here I am, Lord, to do Thy bidding, to do whatever Thou didst intend me to do to-day. I may not know, any more than did the Immaculate babe in her cradle, what the *particular* end is for which He has destined me; but that does not matter. If I am found faithfully doing my duty of the

moment, whatever it may be—doing it, that is to say, for GOD, praising, reverencing, and serving Him in it—I shall not miss the important moment in my life when GOD calls me to the special work for which He has destined me. I can, if I will, do each little duty of my everyday life for GOD, with the pure motive of giving Him pleasure. It is the surest way of making myself indifferent as to whether or not the duty gives *me* pleasure! And it ensures that, from one point of view, *all* duties shall be a pleasure. I was created by GOD to do this particular thing for Him at this particular moment, so I do it. What an uplifting thought! It puts me at once on to another plane—the supernatural plane—where the whole aspect is different. This is the truth, which the little one whose birthday I am thinking about to-day understood so perfectly. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," was her cry even then. It was because Mary understood the value of the "Sacrament of the moment," as it has been called, that when *the* moment of her life came, and her great end was revealed to her, she was able to say: "*Ecce ancilla Domini!*" She was used to saying it; it was the most natural thing for her to say. And so will it be for me, if only I will practise as Mary did. I shall bow to His Will in the *great* crises of my life—not naturally but supernaturally—because I have formed the habit in all the *little* things that make up my life.

Point III.—THE DOVE

Overshadowing His spouse is the Holy Ghost. He it was Who filled her with grace at the moment of the Immaculate Conception. He it is Who will keep her "full of grace" at every moment of her life. Never for one instant will He leave her. Never for one instant will she cease to be the Temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Always will He be able to say to her: "Thou art all fair,

O my love, and there is not a spot in thee." (Cant. iv. 7.) Why? Because Mary will never "*extinguish* the Holy Spirit." (1 Thess. v. 19.) She will never "*grieve*" Him. (Eph. iv. 30.) And not only will she never *resist* a single one of His inspirations, but she will never let *one* pass by unnoticed. Her correspondence to grace will be perfect.

Oh, what need I have to turn to the little one in her cradle to-day, and say: "Pray for me *now*"! Pray that I may never extinguish the Holy Spirit, but live always in a state of grace. Pray that I may never grieve Him, Whose temple I am, by resisting His pleadings with me.

Colloquy with the babe in her cradle.

Resolution. To make much of the "Sacrament of the moment" to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "In me is all grace." (Ecclus. xxiv. 25.)

Mary's Presentation in the Temple

"*In the holy dwelling-place I have ministered before Him.*" (Ecclus. xxiv. 14.)

1*st Prelude.* The child on the Temple steps.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to present myself to GOD.

Point I.—MARY

At the age of three years, tradition tells us, Mary left her home to go and live in the Temple—not merely, as other little girls of her time, to attend the Temple school, but to dedicate herself to GOD, and to live continually under the shadow of His Presence, as Samuel of old had done. Her desire, even at that tender age, was to confirm her parents' dedication of her at her birth, by giving herself up entirely to GOD, to live a hidden life with Him away from everything, however lawful, that might disturb

her union with Him. She waited only for His call, and as soon as it was given, she left all and followed—even her parents must take a second place.

So, joyously and eagerly, did Mary fulfil her end of the moment. GOD called her, and she went to Him. She did not know what He wanted her for, nor did she seek to know. Sufficient for her that He wanted her, and was calling. At once she presented herself before Him as the little Samuel of old. "Here am I, for Thou didst call me. Speak, for Thy servant heareth." (1 Kings iii. 9.) She was ready for anything that He might want.

And this should be the attitude of all who would serve Him—a constant presentation of themselves to Him for whatever He wants. This attitude can only be arrived at by the spirit of sacrifice. To be always at liberty for GOD'S service, the soul must be disentangled from all else, free from all that would hold it back. And this means sacrifice. Mary, presenting herself at the Temple, is specially, though not exclusively, the model of those who are called to the Religious Life. But do not let us make any mistake—a Religious is not *free* to give himself to GOD because he has left parents and home and possessions. He may go through all these preliminaries, and yet not be, by any means, at GOD'S service. The great work of disentangling the soul and setting it free is done *inside* the Cloister, while the Religious is learning that it is *self* which stands in the way, and that until *that* is crushed, he is not able to render to GOD free and joyous service, such as Mary did. And this lesson has to be learned by those outside the Cloister too, if they would follow Mary in being always ready to answer GOD'S calls and do His biddings. It is not their home and friends and possessions that they are asked to quit, but *themselves.* GOD will constantly want them in the midst of their busy lives, and they will never be too much occupied or engrossed to answer His calls, if self is out of the question. "Present

your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto GOD, your reasonable service." (Rom. xii. 1.) Present yourselves each day, each hour, each moment, with each joy, each sorrow, each duty, each difficulty—present all as an offering to Him, Who expects your reasonable service. This is the lesson which the child on the Temple steps teaches us to-day—the lesson of *self-sacrifice.*

Point II.—JOACHIM AND ANNE

Her parents did not thwart her in her wish. They had made their sacrifice three years before, and they were not likely to take it back now. They had probably told Mary the story of their long, childless years; of their earnest prayers to GOD; and of their promise to give the child back to Him should He bless them with one. They would have told her, too, that they had offered her to GOD at birth, and that, as soon as she was old enough, she would present herself in GOD'S Temple, as something dedicated to His service. And now, to-day, they accompany their little one to the "holy dwelling-place" where she is to "minister before Him," and watch her climbing the Temple steps, at the top of which the Priest is waiting to receive her in GOD'S name. Desolate though their home would now be, Joachim and Anne would rather have it so than interfere in any way with the call of GOD to their child. They recognised that GOD has *His* rights, and that these must come first.

What an honour GOD shows to parents, when He gives a vocation to a child of theirs; and what a blessing is thereby bestowed on the whole family! And surely, if there is merit laid up for the one who, in answer to GOD'S call, leaves father, mother, brother, sister, friend, to follow Him, there is merit also for those who make perhaps an equally great sacrifice, even if it is somewhat grudgingly made. GOD will not forget the hearts and homes which

have been made desolate because He has ravished a heart there. He is never outdone in generosity. Those who have given up their treasure on earth will find treasure in Heaven.

Children sometimes give themselves unnecessary pain by presuming too readily that their parents' consent will be withheld. They will often find their parents more ready than they think to make the sacrifice. It is not likely that GOD would give a vocation in a family without making *some* sort of preparation there for it. His ways are not our ways, and so it happens that there are many surprises.

Point III.—MARY'S VOW

It is not known exactly when she made it—probably not on the day of her Presentation. She would take then the *Temporary* Vow of Virginity, as all the pupils at the Temple school did till they left to be married. But some time during her stay in the Temple, Mary, probably unknown to anyone but GOD, Who inspired her, took a vow of *Perpetual* Virginity. She could keep nothing back from GOD; He must have all. She presented herself "wholly acceptable unto God."

To understand what a strange thing this Vow of Mary's was, we must remember that in those days *everyone* married, even priests and High Priests, and everyone hoped — and especially now that the expectation was getting keener—that his would be the favoured family in which the Messias was to be born. Mary had more reason to hope than many others, for was she not of the tribe of Judah, and of the House of David? Yet she took a vow which cut her off from all hope that this greatest of blessings would be hers. Why? Because her sacrifice of self was perfect. Self was laid entirely on one side, and, as a consequence, her humility was so great that she never thought it possible that the honour of being the

Mother of the Messias could be hers, and she cut herself off from all prospect of it. It was this very self-abnegation which was fitting Mary for the destiny GOD intended for her. Her Vow of Virginity, made in response to GOD'S inspirations, was the necessary means for the carrying out of His plans. GOD'S ways are not our ways. "Behold a *virgin* shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel." (Is. vii. 14.) But there were no virgins; and the fact that every mother in Israel was hoping to be the mother of the Messias was a proof that this "sign," which GOD Himself gave, was wholly ignored. It was contrary to the spirit of the age. And this was GOD'S moment. Clearly He gave His call: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house; and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty." (Ps. xliv. 11, 12.) And as the little one, in answer to the appeal, joyously mounted the Temple steps, the Angels were already saluting her as *Queen of Virgins*. She was the first; how many would follow in her train! "*After her* shall virgins be brought to the King; her neighbours shall be brought to Thee; they shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing; they shall be brought into the Temple of the King. Instead of thy fathers, sons shall be born unto thee." (Verses 15–17.)

May there not be a warning here for those who, having, in imitation of Mary, taken the Vow of Virginity, desire too ardently to be the "spiritual Mothers of children"? Mary had no such desires. Her whole desire was for union with GOD—there was not a tinge of self in it. The soul which thinks itself unworthy of being used is the one GOD uses, the soul which is wrapped up in seeking after its own perfection, hiding itself in its interior life, living its life in solitude with GOD and for GOD. Blessed are the Mothers of spiritual children! Yes, but rather blessed are they who hear the word of GOD and keep it. There should be no limit to our zeal for souls, but it should be

covered up by an annihilation of self, and an unobtrusive humility—a humility which teaches us to *act*, not to talk, as if *we* could never be the ones chosen by GOD to do His work. Humility, far from being an obstacle, always makes it easier for GOD to carry out His plans.

Colloquy. "O Mary, Queen of Virgins, grant that by thy intercession we may deserve to be presented one day to the Most High in the Temple of His glory." (*Collect for the Feast of the Presentation, B.V.M., Nov. 21.*)

Resolution. To present myself often to GOD to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Congratulate me, all ye that love the Lord, because when I was a little one, I pleased the Most High." (*Common Office of Our Lady.*)

Mary's Marriage

"*Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born* JESUS, *Who is called Christ.*" (St Matt. i. 16.)

1*st Prelude.* Picture of the marriage of Our Lady and St Joseph.
2*nd Prelude.* The grace of confidence in GOD.

Point I.—MARY

Twelve years have passed since the little child mounted the Temple steps to present herself to GOD. Never, during that time, has she taken back the smallest part of her offering. Always has she been presenting herself as a living sacrifice; always has she been *full* of grace, doing GOD'S will perfectly, glorifying Him by her every thought, word, and action, as no human creature had ever glorified Him. How much Mary added during those twelve years to the Treasury of merits from which the Church was to draw, through all time, in answer to the appeals of her children, who were anxious to make satisfaction for their

sins! In return for a little Indulgenced Prayer, or Act, the Church unlocks the Treasury, and the superabundant merits of Mary, added to the infinite merits of her Divine Son, are given to the suppliant, either to make satisfaction for his own sins, or, if he will, to be applied to the souls in Purgatory, and thus lessen the debt they owe to GOD, and shorten the distance that lies between them and the Beatific Vision, for which they so earnestly long.

Oh, blessed Treasury of merits! JESUS, Who poured into it His infinite merits, has an interest in it. Mary, whose wondrous merits all went into it, has an interest in it. The Saints, whose superabundant satisfactions are stored up there, have an interest in it. The Holy Souls must watch with the keenest interest for the moments when the Church, coming with the keys, entreats from Him, Who alone has jurisdiction in Purgatory, that her treasures may be handed to this or that particular soul; and He, Whose justice, as well as His mercy, is infinite, will distribute them as He will. And shall not I, too, take an interest in this wondrous Treasury? Let me never forget to make use of it; and let my prayer every morning be a fervent and a heart-felt one: "I desire to gain all the Indulgences that I can this day."

But the time came when Mary had to leave the seclusion of the Temple, and give herself in marriage. She was helpless to prevent this, for her Vow was a secret, unknown even to her parents. All she could do was to leave the matter in GOD'S Hands. It was to Him she had offered her virginity, and she trusted Him to guard it. How simple and child-like was her trust! The path pointed out to her *appeared* to be directly opposite to the one she had chosen, but it was pointed out by those whom GOD had chosen to represent Himself to her—the priests of the Temple, or her parents, or both. Her faith was great enough to believe that GOD can make no mistakes, that He cannot call in two different directions, that all will work together to fulfil His

Will, if only His Will is put *first*. What a lesson for us! How often in my life has something happened, some way opened, which seemed to cut at the very root of some cherished plan! And yet, on looking back, I see that had I not followed GOD'S call along the path which *seemed* to be leading the wrong way, I should never have been able to carry out that plan which I had made for His glory. Why was Abraham called the friend of GOD? Was it not because of his confidence in GOD—confidence shown in his readiness to follow wherever GOD called—even when He called him to sacrifice the child of the promises? GOD loves to lead us about, by circuitous paths, and thus to bring out our love and trust and obedience. Had Mary taken a line of her own, and refused to marry because of her Vow, she would have frustrated GOD'S plans for the Incarnation.

I do not want to frustrate His plans for me. Let me remember this the next time I am tempted to turn a deaf ear to a call of His, which does not fit in with my tastes and desires and hopes.

Point II.—JOSEPH

The husband, chosen by GOD for this most delicate and most responsible position, was our dear St Joseph. He was the one man in all the world of whom GOD could be sure. He was "a just man," one who would put no obstacle to GOD'S designs, but would, by his silence, tact, self-sacrifice, and fidelity lend himself to further them.

Let me dwell for a little while on these qualities—qualities which GOD values and looks for, when He wants someone to whom He can entrust His work or His secrets; and perhaps I shall discover things which may help me to be more zealous in His service, to be less for self and more for Him.

Some have thought that Mary confided her secret to Joseph; and that he showed his sympathy, and readiness

to enter into all her interests, by taking the Vow of Virginity too, thus preparing himself to be the husband of Mary and the foster-father of JESUS.

Point III.—THE MARRIAGE

And so this most beautiful marriage took place; and the Holy Spirit, Who was ever watching over His spouse, blessed and sanctified the union of these two virgin souls. It was a union in which the body was forgotten—or rather, the spiritual life had reached such heights by means of the body, that is, of the senses, that the soul was able to live entirely in those heights. The soul was helped upwards by the body, as GOD intended it to be. When the body is dead, the soul can grow no more. The level of the spiritual life, at which I am found at death, will be mine through all eternity. The converse of this truth is, that the body is necessary for the growth of the spiritual life, and that the soul grows in proportion to the help it gets from the body. These thoughts will help me to understand how much the chaste marriage of Joseph and Mary must have aided their spiritual life, and how the Angels must have rejoiced at a union which savoured so much more of Heaven than of Earth.

Now, all was ready. The Virgin who was to conceive and bear a child, Whose name was to be Emmanuel—GOD with us—had got a guardian. GOD could work His stupendous miracle, and keep it hidden, as He willed it to be for the present, from the curious gaze of unbelievers. Mary, by her self-abandonment, was supplying GOD with all He needed, never thwarting Him, nor putting the least obstacle in His way.

And so we leave her, doing the work of the little cottage at Nazareth, while her carpenter-husband labours to support her. Mary has changed her abode; her outward circumstances have altered; but her union with GOD suffers no

change; it remains unbroken, undisturbed; nothing has the power to disturb her thoughts of Him. And Mary is my model. What I have to aim at, too, is a union with GOD so real and so close that the changes and chances of this mortal life have no power to interrupt it. This blessed lot will be mine when I have faith enough to see GOD'S Hand in every circumstance of my life. If I know that He is there, why need I trouble so much about the ups and downs? The sea of life is bound to have waves. What I have to do is to see to it that my little barque rides on the top of them in the most perfect security and peace. The Master is at the helm, and I am *with Him* in the boat. My thoughts, surely, will be fixed on Him rather than on the changes in the weather!

Colloquy with Our Lady, asking her to get me more faith.

Resolution. To let nothing interrupt my union with GOD.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Sancta Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis."

Hail Mary!

"*The Angel Gabriel was sent from GOD into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel, being come in, said unto her: Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!*" (St Luke i. 26–28.)

1*st Prelude.* Gabriel saying the first *Hail Mary.*
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to say my *Hail Maries* well.

When all was ready and GOD'S moment had arrived—"when the fulness of the time was come" (Gal. iv. 4)—heaven opened, and one of GOD'S messengers, Gabriel, an Archangel, was sent to Nazareth on a secret errand to Mary. He knew her well, and he expressed his knowledge in the first *Hail Mary* that was ever said. Let us

meditate on these familiar words, and try to find a few thoughts which may help us to say our *Hail Maries* better.

Point I.—HAIL!

Reverently he salutes her; for though she is not yet the Mother of GOD, she is immaculate, and worthy of all honour; besides, he is in the secret, and knows GOD'S designs. "Hail! full of grace."

What does it mean—this word "*Ave*," *Hail!* with which Gabriel begins his message? It is an expression of respect, honour, and reverence. It was the salutation always given to the Roman Emperor: *Ave! Cæsar Imperator.* But it is not only a form of greeting; it implies also that he who uses it is anxious to attract attention because he has something to say or some favour to ask.

How often I say it!—*Hail Mary!* What do I mean by it? I ought to mean that I am saluting the Queen of Heaven with all respect, honour, and reverence; and also that I, her child, am calling my Mother's attention. When she hears my *Hail!* she expects that I have something to say to her, or that I want something. Is it so? And if Mary turned and said: "Yes, my child, what is it?" should I know?

My *Hail!* should be also to call my Mother's attention to the fact that I am there if *she* has anything to say to me, or if she wants anything. Hail Mary! Your child is here, ready to do anything for you. When she turns at my *Hail!* to ask me for something, does she always get it? Or is she disappointed to find that her child's thoughts are not really with her at all?

What shall I do, for I know that I stand convicted; and much though I should like each *Hail Mary* that I say to mean all this, I know that it does *not?* Would it be better not to say it at all, than to risk any want of respect to that Mother whom I love so dearly?

Oh no. Does not a mother love to hear the voice of her babe in its cradle, even though the sounds it makes are quite inarticulate, and it cannot say what it wants? She always understands, and is able to interpret the baby language, and will give it what is good for it, though it may be all unconscious of its needs. None but the mother would recognise that the babe was calling her attention—not even the babe itself. Is not this something like my *Hail Maries* carelessly and lightly said? I say them because I am Mary's child; it is the most natural thing to do; and she will interpret them as her Mother's heart knows how. And, like the babe in its cradle, I love to feel that she is at my side, because I have attracted her attention, even though I may have done it almost from habit, and may not know exactly why.

Hail Mary! I will say the blest words as often as I can, putting into them all the meaning and fervour of which I am capable, and leaving it to my Mother to make up all deficiencies.

Point II.—Full of Grace

How is Mary full of grace?

1. Because she was conceived without sin: that is, her soul was full of grace instead of original sin. She was full of grace always—even before she was the Mother of the Author of grace.

2. Because of her correspondence to grace. She was always faithful to grace. She never let one single opportunity pass by her unused. The more faithful I am to the inspirations of grace, the fuller shall I be of grace. It is a question of my fidelity, not of God's generosity. He never fails—the grace is always there waiting for me.

3. Because she was always meriting grace. Each correspondence to grace entitled her to more, as it does me. It is by virtue of her merits that she can obtain from her Divine Son all the grace that her children need. Con-

fidently may they appeal to her, for she is the "Mother of Divine Grace."

"*In me is all grace of the way.*" (Ecclus. xxiv. 25.) So Mary says to her children, and she has all I need for the way—that is, for my journey through life. The way is hard—it is the Highway of the Cross, the way that JESUS trod before me. Let me never attempt to tread it alone—not for a single hour, for the pitfalls are many; but let me ask Mary to accompany me—Mary with her never-failing supply of grace. It was JESUS Himself Who gave me His Mother, and He gave her also all the grace that He knew I should need for the way. What a provision He has made for me! If I drew upon my stores more confidently, I should be much fuller of grace than I am.

Hail Mary! full of grace, thou art my Mother. Let me put my hands in thine and keep close to thee. So shall the way have no terrors for me, and so shall I be able to tread in the Footsteps of thy Son, along His Own Highway of the Cross.

Point III.—THE LORD IS WITH THEE. BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN

The Lord is with thee. These words were often said of or to those to whom GOD was about to entrust some special work. He was "with Joseph" while he was in Putiphar's prison, preparing him for the great work of serving the nation during the famine. (Gen. xxxix. 21.) "I will be with thee," GOD said to Moses at the burning bush, when He told him that it was he who was to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. (Ex. iii. 12.) And to Josue, who had to bring the chosen people into the promised land, He said: "As I have been with Moses, so I will be with thee. Fear not, and be not dismayed: because the Lord thy GOD is with thee in all things whatsoever thou shalt go to." (Jos. i. 5–9.) "The Lord is with thee, O most valiant of men." This was the

message the angel brought to Gedeon at the threshing floor, for he was to leave his wheat and go to deliver GOD'S people from idolatry and from their enemies. (Jud. vi. 12.)

And now when Mary is being singled out for the greatest work that was ever entrusted to any child of Adam—that of being the Mother of Him Who was to save not one nation only, but the whole world, GOD sends an Archangel and bids him say to her: *The Lord is with thee.* GOD was with Mary always; but now all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are to be with her in a very special way, to enable her to co-operate with GOD'S designs for her. But the message goes further: "Blessed art thou among women." Gabriel tells her that GOD'S message to her is that she is blessed, and more blessed than all other women! It is praise indeed, and praise from GOD Himself. But GOD can trust Mary with praise. She is full of humility, for she is full of grace; and GOD knows that she will look at things from His point of view—not from her own.

I may get some consolation from these words for myself. GOD sometimes gives me work to do for Him. How blessed I am to be picked out and chosen by Him! And I may be quite sure that He is *with me* for it. It is His own work, and He will look after it Himself; but He needs an instrument. The workman is never far from his tools, unless he has thrown them on one side as useless. "The Lord is with thee." If I see to it that I am an instrument fit and ready for His service, I need have no other anxiety. He will use me when He wants me; the responsibility of the work will be all His, and He will be with me, doing His work by means of me.

O Mary, my Mother, help me to see things from GOD'S point of view, as thou didst. Obtain for me the grace to be full of confidence about any work with which GOD may entrust me. And while I rejoice to be amongst

those *blessed* ones whom He picks out to do His work, obtain for me the grace of humility. And if the Workman should allow any words of praise to be given to the instrument, may it be because He can count on the humility of His instrument—because He knows that the praise will all be passed on to Himself.

Colloquy with my Mother as we walk along "the way" together—a colloquy about correspondence to grace, about being never alone in my work, about the blessedness of being chosen by Him, about humility.

Resolution. To let my Rosary recall some of these thoughts to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Among the blessed she shall be blessed." (Ecclus. xxiv. 4.)

Mary's First Word

"*And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?*" (Luke i. 34.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture of the Annunciation.

2*nd Prelude.* That my love for GOD may be great enough to separate me from all else.

Point I.—MARY'S SILENCE

We do not know what Mary was doing when the heavenly visitor arrived with his message. She is generally represented as kneeling in contemplation. She may have been: or she may have been about her work. In any case, she was engaged in prayer, for Mary's heart and mind were ever lifted up to GOD; and that is prayer. And GOD can reveal His secrets just as easily to those who are working as to those who are given up to contemplation.

No wonder Mary's attention is arrested, for not only does she see one of GOD'S Archangels, but it is to *her* that

he has come, to *her* that he is showing such reverence and honour, to *her* that he is now delivering his message: "Hail! . . . full of grace; the Lord is with thee. . . . Blessed art thou among women." Each sentence of the message seems more wonderful and startling than the last. Mary does not speak, but she is *troubled*, as she thinks within herself what manner of salutation this is. Her intelligence is perfect, and she knows at once what the message means. It means that she, the one woman who has cut herself off from every prospect of being the Mother of the Messias; that she, who has felt herself so utterly unworthy that legend tells us she used to pray that she might be His Mother's *servant*; that *she* has been singled out by God as the one who was to be blessed among women. And she is *troubled*. It is not the presence of the Angel nor the dignity of his message which is disquieting her—her trouble goes deeper; but still she does not speak—she waits in silence for GOD to explain Himself or to direct her.

How much wiser in *most* cases it would be for me, if I kept silence, for a time at any rate, when I am face to face with trouble, or difficulty, or perplexity. Of one thing I may be sure—that the trouble is a message from GOD, and if I wait patiently, He will reveal more to me, and throw light upon what seems so obscure. Nothing is gained by making complaints, and losing my calm and self-possession. Much is gained by silence; for silence to man, at such times, generally means converse with GOD, and to obtain this more intimate union with my heart is one of His chief reasons for sending me His messages.

Gabriel, seeing that she is troubled, hastens to reassure her: "Fear not, Mary." He is GOD'S messenger, and he is giving GOD'S consolation, so he calls her by her name. Consolation is never far off when it is to GOD alone that we turn for it. Gabriel then tells her quite plainly what are God's intentions concerning her, if she gives her consent and co-operation—that she is indeed to be the Mother of

the Messias; that she is to call him JESUS; that her Son is to be great, and is to be called the Son of the Most High; that GOD will give Him a throne and a kingdom; and that of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Point II.—MARY'S FIRST WORD

She has pondered in her heart, and now she speaks: "*How shall this be done?*" St Bernardine, who calls the seven recorded words of Our Lady, "*Seven Flames of Love*," calls this first word "A Flame of *Separating* Love" (*flamma amoris separantis*). Let us try to find out why.

"How shall this be done?" Her question shows clearly what is the cause of her trouble. It is the thought of her vow of virginity—that precious offering which, as a little child, she had made to GOD. This it is which forces Mary, who so values silence, to speak. "How shall this be done," and yet my vow be left intact? To it at any cost I must be faithful. Mary, by her first word, shows that her love for GOD is so intense that it separates her from all else besides. It was out of love for Him that she made that vow. It was a flame of separating love that burnt within her, making a clear division between GOD and anything, however lawful and even desirable in itself, which might hinder her union with Him. And it is the same flame of love which now impels her to speak: "How shall this be done?" seeing that I am separated, consecrated to GOD. Her love so detaches her from all else that even the honour of being singled out to be the Mother of GOD has no attraction for her in comparison with keeping that contract made with GOD, by which she promised to be wholly His.

Am I, like Mary, absolutely faithful to any contract that I may have made with GOD? Do I say: "How can this be done?" seeing I have made that promise, seeing I am a

Christian, seeing I have been to Holy Communion, seeing I have taken certain vows. All these are so many cords of love which should separate me from the world. My contract with GOD must come before everything else—all turns upon my fidelity to it. Mary was troubled because she feared her vow was in danger; and her trouble was pleasing to GOD.

Mary's separating love for GOD was the outcome of GOD'S separating love for Mary. Her very vow of virginity, which, humanly speaking, made it impossible for her to be the Mother of the Messias, was part of GOD'S plan, separating her from the rest of the world for this honour. When GOD wants something done, He separates the soul which He has chosen to do it, though at the moment the soul may be wholly unconscious of the reasons for the process which gives it so much pain. The separation may be one of place, or family, or affections, or cherished hopes and plans. GOD'S separating love takes various forms: but in some way or other He must and will separate from self those whom He intends to use for His service. St Paul says of himself that GOD separated him from his earliest infancy. (Gal. i. 15.) None would have guessed that he was separated when he was haling the Christians to death and persecuting the Church of GOD beyond measure. We understand so little of GOD'S plans, and of His preparation of souls for His service. St Paul tells us that later he was "separated unto the Gospel of GOD." (Rom. i. 1.) And when Our Lord wanted him for a special mission, the order went forth to the Church: "Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them."

Help me, my Mother, to co-operate with grace, lest I hinder GOD'S designs for me; and while *His* love is a separating one, may mine be the same—a love strong enough to separate me from all but His Will.

Colloquy with Mary, asking her to obtain for me the grace to say with her: "How shall this be done?"

whenever the least thing comes between me and my duty to GOD.

Resolution. To let nothing to-day separate me from the love of GOD. (Rom. viii. 39.)

Spiritual Bouquet. "How shall this be done?"

Mary's Second Word

"*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of GOD. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word.*" (St Luke i. 35, 38.)

1*st Prelude.* Picture of the Annunciation.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to meditate more deeply on the *First Joyful Mystery.*

Point I.—GABRIEL'S EXPLANATION

In answer to Mary's question, the Angel explains quite simply how GOD'S plans are to be brought about. "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.*" No prophecy had ever said a word of this; the agency of the Holy Ghost had never been hinted at till the Angel made it known to Mary to quiet her legitimate trouble. And as soon as Mary knew that it was to be the work of the Holy Ghost, she was at rest—all trouble disappeared. Do I follow my Mother's example in this? As soon as I know that whatever is being asked of me is the Holy Spirit's doing, am I at rest? Is there no more trouble, no more indecision, no more questioning, even though the inspiration may seem to be going to upset my plans, and may be contrary to all that has hitherto seemed right? It is not necessary to *understand* GOD'S dealings with me, but as soon as I know that they are His dealings, it *is* necessary to co-operate at whatever cost—otherwise there will be trouble in my soul.

The co-operation with the work of the Holy Spirit will produce a calm and a peace which no exterior things, however changed they may be, will have the power to disturb.

And then the Angel tells her about her cousin Elizabeth and the miraculous things which are happening to her, in order to prove to Mary that "no word is impossible with GOD"—that He, the GOD of nature, has power over nature's laws—that when he makes such promises as she has just heard, "the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of GOD," all will be fulfilled.

Point II.—MARY'S SECOND WORD

Then Mary speaks again: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word." She gives her consent, shows herself ready to co-operate with GOD; and at the same moment, the Word is made Flesh; Gabriel adores the GOD-Man, as he had pledged himself to do at the time of the War in Heaven, and, his mission accomplished, departs from her.

St Bernadine calls this second word: "A flame of *transforming* love" (*flamma amoris transformantis.*) It was certainly *love* that prompted the word, but in what sense was it a *transforming* love?

(1) *It was a transformation for Mary.* Her first word *separated* her for Him Who loved her; her second word *transformed* her into Him Who loved her. It made them for ever one. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." Here I am for Thee to do whatever Thou wilt with me. I put no obstacle in Thy way. *Fiat.* "Be it done to me according to Thy word." This word was not only the outcome and the proof of her perfect union with GOD, it was also the turning point of her life—and not only of her life but of the life of the whole world. Heaven—and earth too, though unconsciously — was waiting for this word of

Mary's, a word which she could have withheld. The word was spoken, and by it she lent herself to GOD as His co-worker; by it she was transformed from a maid into a mother, and in that moment of transformation she saw all that it meant—she saw Calvary, and she said *Fiat.* "Be it done to me." She saw herself transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18) by pain and suffering, and yet she would not withhold her *Fiat.* Why? Because she *loved,* and from that moment the transforming process was ever going on in her soul; and the flame of transforming love was ever burning more brightly, showing her the way to greater heights and deeper depths of the love of GOD, and so transforming her at each further step, that she shrank from nothing.

(2) *It was a transformation for the world.* This word of Mary's, by which she gave her consent to GOD'S plan of Redemption, changed the face of the whole world. It began a new era—A.D. instead of B.C. It settled the moment of the arrival of the "fulness of time" (Gal. iv. 4)—of GOD'S time. As a result of it, GOD was already tabernacling among men. The leaven of the Gospel, which was to leaven the whole world, was already beginning to work. Mary's word produced a transformation in the world, and though it "knew Him not," it was never the same world again.

(3) This word is a *transformation for the soul* which makes it its own. Any soul which really says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word," is transformed, for it is "made conformable to the image of His Son." (Rom. viii. 29.) Nothing but love has the power to bring about this transformation in the soul, for it means the effacement of self; it means a readiness to do GOD'S will at whatever cost; it means a holy indifference to one's own plans and theories and even judgment—it means what it says: "*Fiat,*" for everything that GOD arranges. When this is so there is a complete

transformation; the selfish soul becomes selfless; the weak, strong; the timid, courageous; the hesitating, decided; the doubting, confident; the agitated, peaceful and calm. Heaven has already begun in the soul. Love—GOD's love for it first, and then its love for GOD—has transformed it.

Are these great things possible for me? Yes, quite possible. How was Mary transformed? By Christ dwelling within her. How was the world transformed? By Christ dwelling within it. And this is how I am to be transformed, by Christ dwelling within me. Each Communion should be to me a "flame of transforming love." It is then that, in answer to the appeal: "My child, give Me thy heart," I say to Him: "Be it done to me according to Thy word," and He comes to do what He will in my heart; and if only I put no obstacles in His way, His love will transform me into all that He wants me to be.

Colloquy with Our Lady, asking her to get me the grace of submission, which alone can transform me.

Resolution. To do nothing to-day to hinder the transforming process in me.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ et concepit de Spiritu Sancto."

Mary's Third Word

"*And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth.*" (St Luke i. 40.)

1*st Prelude.* Mary saluting Elizabeth.
2*nd Prelude.* The grace of Charity.

Point I.—MARY'S CHARITY

When the Angel left her, Mary's thoughts seem to have been fixed, not, as we should have expected, on the part of

the heavenly message which concerned herself, but on what had been incidentally revealed to her about her cousin Elizabeth. What a total oblivion of self there is in Mary and what charity! She picks out just the little bit of the message that concerns somebody else, decides that it is not for nothing that she has been told this—it may be that her cousin has need of her; and so, instead of giving herself up to dwelling on the great things that have been said and done to her, she rises up in those days and goes into the hill country, with haste, to pay a visit of charity. And she takes JESUS with her.

Mary is my model, and I can surely find some lessons to study here. One is that charity passes before everything, even sometimes before spiritual exercises and contemplation and meditation, going to Mass and Benediction. I see too that though I must be ever mindful of GOD'S benefits, I need not dwell too much—if at all—on the interior graces He has given to my soul; on any words of praise—though they may have come almost directly from Himself; on any piece of work that He has effected through my instrumentality. It is far more wholesome to be rising up to go to the next duty, starting forth into the hill country of difficulties, if need be, and thus taking my thoughts off myself by doing something for somebody else. I shall not, by thus acting, lose any of the graces or any of the sweetness, for I shall take JESUS with me, and together we shall face the difficulties of the next bit of life's journey.

Point II.—MARY'S SALUTATION

She *saluted* Elizabeth. We are not told what this salutation was, but we know that words were spoken, because Elizabeth *heard* them. "The voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears," she says. It was probably just the form of salutation customary among the Jews: "The Lord is with you!" But what a different meaning the

words have on Mary's lips! She, the Mother of the Word Incarnate, has brought Him with her to the house of Zachary. The Lord Himself is indeed there in a way that He has never been before. John the Baptist, yet unborn, understands the salutation, and leaps to adore his God; and at that moment JESUS, Whose work on earth has already begun, cleanses His Forerunner from the stain of original sin. Elizabeth also understands in what sense the words are spoken; for the Holy Ghost, Who has been doing great things for her too, has communicated to her the heavenly secret about the Mother and the Child. She is expectant and ready for her Visitors, and when Mary gives her wondrous salutation: "The Lord is with you," filled with the Holy Ghost she answers: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb"; and then she thinks of the great honour which GOD is showing to her home by permitting Mary with her Child to visit it. "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Next she tells Mary of the joy that has been caused within her, and adds: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, for all that the Lord hath spoken about the Child will now be accomplished."

Thus Mary receives the blessed assurance that all is true—not that she doubted, and not that she needed any confirmation, but it must, nevertheless, have been a comfort to her to hear herself called "The Mother of my Lord," and that by one who had not heard the news from any human lips.

It was because Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Ghost" that she saw all so clearly and believed that Mary was indeed the Mother of God. It is a truth which many people in the twentieth century have not yet grasped. The reason is that they have not yet grasped the meaning of the Incarnation.

"*Nos cum prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria.*" ("May Mary the Virgin bless us with her Holy Child.")

Point III.—MARY'S THIRD WORD

St Bernardine describes this third word as a "flame of *communicating* love" (*flamma amoris communicantis.*) No sooner has Mary become "the Mother of fair love" than she wants to communicate that love to others—not to communicate her secret—no, of that she does not speak—but to let the flame of love, which is burning within her, reach others also. So it is not Mary only, but JESUS within her, Who "makes haste" to go into the "hill country." He is in a hurry to begin His work. It is JESUS, Divine Love, Who enters into the house of Zachary and salutes Elizabeth. It is the Heart of JESUS, burning already with love for sinners, which speaks to the heart of John. It is because God, Who for love of us men became incarnate, is communicating that love to her, that Elizabeth is able to grasp so clearly the mysteries by which she is surrounded. Ah, yes, Mary's third word is indeed one of communicating love, because she communicates to all around her, JESUS, Who is love.

O Mother of fair love, why do the poor banished children of Eve so continually turn to thee? Is it not just because of this flame of communicating love? Is it not because they know that to go to Mary is to go to JESUS; that when they appeal to the heart of Mary it is the Heart of JESUS which answers through her; that her chief work is to communicate His love to them?

Three months Mary abode in Zachary's house, and all that time the flame of communicating love abode there too, burning ever more brightly within her. What a privilege for the house of Zachary! We read in Sacred History that once "the Ark of the Lord abode in the house of Obededom the Gethite for three months; and the Lord blessed Obededom and all his household." (2 Kings vi. 11.) What then must have been the blessings bestowed on Zachary's household, while Mary the "Ark

of the Covenant" abode there! "*Fœderis arca, ora pro nobis.*" Pray that we too may get the blessings of those who receive thee as their constant guest.

But Mary is my example. Is there anything in which I can copy her in her visit to her cousin Elizabeth? Let me make a self-examination on a few points suggested by this meditation.

Am I in *haste* to perform acts of charity, especially when the request for them comes at inconvenient moments?

Do I always take JESUS with me when I go to visit my friends?

Do those whom I visit feel that I create an atmosphere—an atmosphere which makes them more ready to bless JESUS and Mary?

These things can only be so by my having a flame of communicating love within me. Where can I get it? At each communion, when JESUS comes to me in the Sacrament of His Love. And if I put no hindrance in His way, He will communicate Himself to others through me. Let me, then, aim at being a Christ-bearer. "Glorify and bear Christ in your body." (1 Cor. vi. 20.) It is often through His children that JESUS does His work in the world, and communicates His love to others.

Colloquy with our Lady.

Resolution. To be a Christ-bearer to all whom I greet, remembering that even a little act of politeness may turn the scale in the conversion of a soul. A visit paid, a word dropped in conversation, may be a necessary part of GOD'S plans.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Flamma amoris communicantis."

Mary's Fourth Word

And Mary said: "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

1*st Prelude.* Mary saying the *Magnificat.*

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to catch something of the spirit in which she said it.

Point I.—The Magnificat

As soon as Elizabeth has finished "crying out with a loud voice" her praise of Mary and of Jesus, and of the benefits God has wrought for herself and her son, Mary speaks, and in the longest of her recorded "words" gives vent to the thoughts pent up in her breast. She at once closes the door against any praise given to herself: "My soul doth magnify the *Lord*"—He it is Whom we must praise and make much of—"and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Mary understands what it is that is making her so full of joy. It is the presence of Jesus her *Saviour.* She has Him within her, Who has saved her from the stain of original sin, and Who will save her each moment that she lives from actual sin. Well may her spirit rejoice!

She goes on to explain more fully the cause of her joy and exultation. It is because God has done such great things for her. He has regarded the humility of His handmaid. The word used means *humiliation* rather than humility. Mary is too humble to speak of her humility. She is referring rather to her humble circumstances, her low estate. The same word is translated in St James i. 9 as "low condition." He whose name is Holy has regarded *me*! And His mercy is not only for me, but for all that fear Him. It is because of the great things He has done to me that "all generations shall call me blessed." Mary passes on all the praise and honour to God. She speaks of herself only to recall her low estate—only to let her littleness magnify God's greatness in the eyes of others

—only that in calling her blessed they may be lifted up to "the GOD and Father of our Lord JESUS Christ, Who is blessed for ever." (2 Cor. xi. 31.)

Gabriel stands at the head of "all generations." When he was delivering GOD'S message he called her blessed. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, did the same. And yet there are those to-day (and their name is legion!) who think it would defile their lips to speak of the *Blessed* Virgin Mary! Can it be that they do not believe that GOD did great things for her? Can it be that they *prefer* to be among the proud whom He scatters in the conceit of their heart, among the mighty whom He puts down from their seat, among the rich whom He sends away empty? Can it be that they refuse to listen to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Who tells them that Mary is blessed among women? And yet they sing the *Magnificat*, which tells them how ready God is to "exalt the humble" and to "fill the hungry with good things." O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of GOD, pray for all those who honour thee by singing thy *Magnificat*, that they may honour thee also by understanding it. Grant that they too may fulfil thy prophecy—"All generations shall call me blessed"—and get in return the blessings thou art so ready to bestow on thy children.

Before I go on, let me ask myself to what extent I am copying my Mother in at once passing on to GOD all praise that may come to me? He it is Who does all for me, and in me, and by me; and the more He gives, the more He ought to get. He knew it would be so with Mary, and therefore He could trust her with "great things." He knew that He would have all the glory. Let me see how much I take into account GOD'S glory. Is it my first motive and object? If He gives me some little thing—for example, an "original" thought, a happy idea, a solution to a problem, some word to help another—is my first thought to thank Him and to praise Him because this will

bring glory to Him? Is it not rather to go and tell it to someone else—to quote my words and deeds—not with the object of edifying others (Satan, to quiet my conscience, tells me that this is the reason), but of gaining glory and praise for myself out of something that is not mine at all? Thus do I rob GOD of His glory, deliberately taking for myself what belongs to Him! Oh, my Mother, teach thy child what real humility means, and that *all* praise belongs of right to GOD.

Point II.—A FLAME OF JOYFUL LOVE

This is the name that St Bernardine gives to Mary's fourth word—"*Flamma amoris jubilantis.*" Her love for GOD was so strong that it made her burst out into this joyful song of praise. She could no longer keep to herself all that GOD had done to her; she must tell others; she was so full of joy that she must sing GOD'S praises. And all her love and joy found expression in the *Magnificat*—a song of thanksgiving for the Incarnation—a song which showed clearly that Mary's joy was caused by the glory that was given to GOD by the Incarnation.

All through those blessed three months during which Mary abode with Zachary and Elizabeth, she was singing *Magnificat.* All through her life she sang *Magnificat*, even though she was the Mother of Sorrows, for the thought of GOD'S glory ever lifted her out of herself and made her praise Him for all He did. It was because Mary had said her *Fiat* that she could say her *Magnificat.*

What do I know of this flame of joyful love? If it is caused by the great things GOD has done, surely it ought to be burning in me. Surely He has done enough for me to make my love so great that it is a flame of *joy* within me. Is it so? Does the joy that is in my heart show itself in my countenance, in my manner, in my actions, and sometimes perhaps in my words? Does my happiness, even in the midst of trial, make others understand what

great things GOD *can* do for those who love Him? If so, I am praising Him and obtaining praise and glory for Him.

Oh, my Mother, look upon thy child, so often discontented, sad, distrustful, murmuring, and obtain for me "the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of grief." (Isaias lxi. 3.) Teach me to say my *Fiat* for everything, and out of it will spring a joyful *Magnificat.* Teach me to love GOD'S will, and to praise Him for all He does.

Colloquy with Our Lady.
Resolution. To let others see my joy to-day.
Spiritual Bouquet. "Our Lady sings *Magnificat* in songs surpassing sweet."

Mary's Silence

"*Mary abode with Elizabeth about three months, and she returned to her own house.*" (St Luke i. 56.)

1*st Prelude.* A statue of Our Lady.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to leave all that concerns me in GOD'S Hands.

Point I.—MARY'S RETURN

We know nothing of what went on during those three months, but we may presume that things continued as they began. It is not likely that Elizabeth said her "*Ave*" only once, and only once spoke of the honour she considered it to have the Mother of GOD in her house. It is not likely that the unborn Forerunner never again saluted His Master, in Whose presence he so continually was. It is impossible to conceive that Mary sang GOD'S praises and her own unworthiness no more during those three months. And what about JESUS? These were the first three months of His life on earth, and grace was

surely going out from Him to His Blessed Mother first, and then to all who knew the secret. And we must not forget the head of the household, Zachary. He, at any rate after the birth of his son, knew the secret too, for he spoke in his song of praise of the "*Orient* from on High (which) hath visited us." (St Luke i. 78.) "Dumb" he had been and "unable to speak," but Mary with her Son had been sojourning in his house, with the result that his doubts had all disappeared, and that he understood already something of the "joy and gladness" which Gabriel had promised should be his (verse 14), and understood also how it came to pass that his son was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." (verse 15.)

But the time comes when Mary has to leave this highly favoured household and go home. Her work of charity is over. Elizabeth no longer needs her, and her thoughts turn to Joseph, her husband, and to Nazareth—to the spot where Gabriel had visited her, and where the Holy Ghost had wrought such great things in her.

Point II.—Mary's Silence to St Joseph

When last we thought about St Joseph, he was abandoning himself to a life of self-sacrifice by his vow of virginity. Since then he has made the sacrifice of sparing Mary from their little home to go and do an act of charity for her kinswoman, and now that that is over, it is probably Joseph himself who goes to fetch her home again. Of the visit of the Archangel to his wife Joseph knows nothing, and Mary keeps the secret locked within her heart. She has not revealed it to anyone. (It was the Holy Ghost who told Elizabeth, and Jesus Himself who saluted John.) But trouble is in store for those two faithful souls. This is natural. It would be strange if God did not take us at our word when we make the sacrifice of ourselves to Him!

It would look as if He did not believe us. "Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately." (St Matt. i. 18, 19.) How much is told in those few simple words! What anguish of soul do they cover! How could Joseph bear to have suspicions of his wife, whom he considered to be purity itself, and whom he loved so tenderly? And yet he was forced to suspect, and as a just man was obliged to keep the law—namely, write a bill of divorce, give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. (Deut. xxiv. 1.) He made up his mind to do this as *privately* as possible, shielding her secret from everyone except the two witnesses who were necessary for the bill of divorce. How nobly Joseph acted! He was ready, for the sake of right, to sacrifice what was most dear to him, to crush at one blow his most cherished affections! No wonder the Holy Spirit calls him a just man! No wonder that he was the one in all the world whom GOD could trust to co-operate with Himself!

And if Joseph suffered, how much more did Mary in seeing him thus troubled, and knowing that she was the cause of his distress. One word from her would have been sufficient to clear away all the difficulties—and it almost seemed as if it would be for the glory of GOD to say the word—at any rate it would have justified her, put an end to Joseph's trouble, and saved her from suspicion, and even perhaps shame and humiliation. But Mary has made her sacrifice — has said her *Fiat*— and this is her first great trial, caused entirely by the fact of her nearness to JESUS, and of the union between her life and His. And so she does not say the word—she does not take back her sacrifice, but meets it generously. It is not for her to publish GOD'S secrets. His dealings with her are for herself, and are not to be shared even with one as dear to her as is St Joseph, unless GOD

bids her. Mary is silent and abandons herself and her trouble and all that concerns her to GOD.

And this is GOD'S moment—when the need is at its height, when both His children have proved their fidelity, and their readiness to abandon themselves to Him and His Will, cost what it may. In his sleep an Angel appears to Joseph and reveals the secret to him, and his sorrow is changed to an unspeakable joy.

If I am striving to tread the way trodden by Mary and the Saints, I shall do well to let self-justification alone. I am not likely to be put to as great a test as were Mary and Joseph, but there are sure to be many little occasions in my life when it is left to my choice either to clear myself of suspicion or to leave the matter in GOD'S Hands, and out of love to Him keep silence, and thus sacrifice a little of my self-love. It is a difficult question, perhaps, when to keep silence and when to speak; but at any rate I need not be in such a hurry to excuse myself and shield myself from blame as I generally am. Nothing will be lost by *waiting*. Mary and Joseph *waited*, with the result that GOD Himself cleared things up for them and brought them consolation. If Joseph had questioned Mary, or if Mary had allayed Joseph's suspicions, both would have acted in a most natural way; but GOD would not have been glorified, and they would have missed the consolation which He reserves for those who are generous in their sacrifices to Him.

Colloquy with Mary.

Resolution. To be silent the next time fault is found with me.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Fear not, Joseph."

Mary's Expectation

"*His left hand is under my head, and His right hand shall embrace me.*" (Cant. ii. 6.)

"*My Beloved to me and I to Him.*" (verse 16.)

1*st Prelude.* Mary and Joseph waiting.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to believe that GOD'S plans are the best.

Point I.—AT NAZARETH

We should like to penetrate into those remaining six months, which Mary and Joseph spent together, before the birth of the Holy Child. Scripture is silent about them, but it is not difficult for a sanctified imagination to picture something of what was taking place. Perhaps the thought of the Altar of Repose on Maundy Thursday will bring the realities home to us better than anything else could. Though He is hidden from our sight, all know that He is there. Angels are in constant adoration, and the faithful do not forget Him. All try to get near and to hold silent communion with Him; and all are expecting the great day when He will rise again and show Himself to them. And He is spending the time in giving His blessing and His grace to all who, by faith, seek Him. The house at Nazareth was in very deed GOD'S Sanctuary, containing the Altar of Repose, where the Saviour of the world was resting. Angels were in constant adoration before their King. The faithful consisted of Mary and Joseph, whose thought and conversation could be about nothing else but the Child Who was coming into the world. And who shall measure the graces and blessings, which that Child was showering upon Mary and her faithful spouse, during those months of waiting and prayer and holy converse, while they planned and arranged with such care and minuteness, as parents are wont to do, every detail connected with the birth of the firstborn?

But man proposes and GOD disposes. GOD, Who "ordereth all things sweetly," (Wisdom viii. 1), was stirring up the whole civilised world so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which said: "And thou, *Bethlehem* Ephrata, . . . out of *thee* shall He come forth to me, that is to be the Ruler in Israel; and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." (Micheas v. 2.) It was in *Bethlehem*—not at *Nazareth*, that the Child was to be born. And to effect this, "in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. . . . And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went . . . out of the city of Nazareth . . . to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and family of David), to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife." (St Luke ii. 1–5.) What a trial this order must have been to Mary! To leave home, to forego all her plans, to take a long journey, to interrupt her days of solitude and calm and peace—and all at the bidding of a heathen Emperor. But Mary knew how to take her trials. *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.* "Be it done to me according to Thy word." For her there were no second causes. It was ever GOD Who was ordering "all things sweetly" for her, and she had nothing to say but "*Ecce ancilla—fiat.*" She waited for nothing but GOD'S will. And as *He* arranged it, she could spend her time of waiting just as well on the public highway to Bethlehem as in the seclusion of Nazareth.

Oh, my Mother, teach me this lesson too: if I could only learn it, how different my life would be! My life—every detail of it—is in GOD'S Hands. He is "ordering it sweetly," and I *complain*! How little is my faith! When my faith is great enough, I shall take all things, as sweetly as GOD orders them, even though they may upset my most cherished plans.

Point II.—On the Way to Bethlehem

And so, in obedience to the command, Mary and Joseph leave the calm and quiet and solitude of their little home, and go to face poverty and difficulties and the unknown. But Jesus is with them, and this makes them independent of exterior circumstances—their calm and quiet are unbroken, and they can find solitude even in the busy thoroughfares. Mary is communing with her Child, and is peaceful with the peace He gives. Joy, too, fills her heart as she thinks how fast the time is approaching when she will see His face.

Oh, how I should love to be allowed to go with them on this journey! At my request, Mary readily consents to take me as her servant, and I am so glad to be in that blessed company that I forego everything else—I know that the Family I have come to live with is *poor*, and I am determined not to ask them to get any special things for *me*. The table has the barest necessities—perhaps hardly these, for true poverty consists in the want of necessities; but it is the company that I care about, and nothing else matters. I can see that all sorts of inconveniences and privations and hardships will be mine, but I cannot be an exception in that Family; and somehow, now that I am so close to the Blessed Mother, I do not wish to be. My great desire is to be like her, and to share all with her and her Son.

At Bethlehem Joseph begins his weary and anxious search for a lodging; but all in vain—no one wants the Holy Family. How Joseph suffers at each refusal—not for himself but for Mary! Mary is too much taken up with her joy to heed the suffering. And the servant—does she regret that she is not in one of the big hotels, as she might have been, or does she turn with joy to follow the Holy Family to the cave, saying: With Jesus and Mary I have all I want, and I love every hardship and every

privation which comes to me, because I have made myself one with them ?

Oh, my Mother, I thank thee for allowing me to be thy servant; I thank thee for bringing me into such close contact with thy Son; I thank thee for every privation, every difficulty, every hardship, every inconvenience, every crossing of my own will which has come to me, because I chose to be in thy company and in that of thy Son. Help me to persevere bravely, thinking all worth while for the sake of the company.

Colloquy with Mary, asking her to get me grace to be always joyous, because I am living my life with her and her Blessed Son.

Resolution. To show myself worthy of the company I am in, by the way I face the little difficulties of my everyday life.

Spiritual Bouquet. "I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid." (Ps. cxv. 16.)

The Stable

"*Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.*" (St Luke ii. 19.)

1*st Prelude.* Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to ponder with Mary.

Point I.—The Birth of Her Son

"She brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger." She has seen His face at last; she has folded Him in her arms and pressed Him to her bosom—her Son and her God. And she ponders — she meditates — she cannot tell her thoughts to any human soul—but she can tell them to her Son. *Dico ego opera mea Regi.* I will speak of my works

to the King. (Ps. xliv. 2.) Many works had been wrought in and through Mary by the Holy Ghost, but they were all the King's secrets, and she pondered over them, speaking of them to Him alone. There was her vow of virginity, which she did not even speak of to her parents; there was the visit of the King's messenger, of which she spoke to no one—not to Elizabeth, nor even to St Joseph; there was the painful journey to Bethlehem, and the difficulty about finding a lodging. She might have told St Luke all about it, and had it all written down in the Gospel—but no, there is not a word except the mere fact that they went to Bethlehem, and that there was no room for them in the inn. Her sufferings were those of the King, and she shared them with Him alone.

And now that she has got her JESUS, she spends her time in pondering—in telling Him her thoughts and her secrets, which are His too.

How much I should gain if I could be a little more like my Mother in this!—if, instead of being so ready to go and talk of all the things that have been said and done to me, or of what I have said or done, or of what I have had to suffer, I were just to speak to my King about it—let it be something between us which nobody else knows anything about. It may often be my duty to speak, as it was Mary's later on, when she was obliged, for example, to tell St Luke all about the Angel's visit and what he said to her, because GOD wanted that piece of revelation to be written. But this was later. She did not go at once and tell Elizabeth all about it. Let us learn from Mary to let our *first* words, at any rate, be for our King; and, if this is so, it is probable that in many cases the matter will go no further, and others as well as ourselves will be saved from the miseries which so often follow from our being too ready to talk. *Dico ego opera mea Regi.* To *Him* I can never say too much, and he loves those silent heart-to-heart colloquies. He loves

the things which are talked over with Him only—the King's secrets.

Point II.—The Shepherds

"They came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger." And during their visit they "understood," and went away to tell the good news to wondering listeners, leaving Mary still pondering. Each moment of her Son's life on earth brings her fresh matter for meditation. She has scarcely time to think of the miraculous birth before she hears "a multitude of the Heavenly Army" proclaiming the birth, praising God, and telling of the glory that is being given to Him, and of the peace that is being brought to earth. And Mary realises that she no longer has her Babe all to herself, that Heaven and earth claim Him. Then the Shepherds arrive; and after they have adored the Saviour Who is born to them, they tell His Mother of all the wonders of that night: of the Angel of the Lord who suddenly stood by them in the night watches; of the "brightness of God"; of how they feared; of how the Angel bid them: "Fear not"; of the good tidings that he brought, and of the great joy which was to be for everyone; that the Angel had actually told them that the Child was the Messias, and that he had given them the strangest sign by which they could know Him—He will be wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger! And lastly, how they had come in haste, as soon as the Angels had gone back to Heaven, and had found it all to be true. What joy this beautiful, simple, story must have brought to the Mother's heart! What fresh subjects for meditation now were hers! What a tender welcome she would give to these simple shepherds, whom God had picked out for such signal favours, and had allowed to be the first worshippers of her Son! How she would realise all the "great things" that God was doing now that she

heard them from the mouths of these "little ones" to whom GOD had revealed them! (St Matt. xi. 25.) How graciously she would accept the poor offerings of these poor men to her Child Who had chosen to be poor! And how proud she would be that she, as His Mother, had the right to lift that little Hand, to convey the blessing which His Heart was giving to those who were going to be His first witnesses and apostles.

"Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." How easy meditation was to Mary! Why? Because she lived always in the closest possible union with JESUS. If I find my meditations difficult, let me examine myself, and see whether the cause may not be that my union with Him is not so close as it was, that I have let something come between us, that I am not telling all my secrets to the King. If this is so, let me hasten to put things right with Him; and then I shall find again that my most precious moments are those in which I can devote my thoughts entirely to my King and ponder over the simple stories told of Him and His Blessed Mother.

Colloquy. The *Alma Redemptoris Mater*:—"Sweet Mother of our Redeemer, gate whereby we enter Heaven, and star of the sea, help us, we fall; yet do we long to rise. Nature looked upon thee with admiration when thou didst give birth to thy Divine Creator, thyself remaining before and after it a pure Virgin. Gabriel spoke his *Hail* to thee; we sinners crave thy pity." (*Anthem from Advent to the Purification.*)

Resolution. To ponder more and speak less.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Dico ego opera mea Regi."

The Circumcision of Mary's Son

"And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, *which was called by the Angel before He was conceived."* (St Luke ii. 21.)

1*st Prelude.* Mary with her Child.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to learn more about them both.

Point I.—The Circumcision

After one week of peace and joy, Mary is called upon to suffer with, and on account of, her Son. The Law of God is clear. "On the eighth day, the infant shall be circumcised." (Lev. xii. 3.) And there is no doubt in the minds of Mary and Joseph, that, though the Holy Child has no need of the rite which probably cleansed away original sin, He must nevertheless submit to it, as being part of His Father's law, every jot and tittle of which He has come to fulfil. So Jesus, of His own free will, classes Himself with sinners, and offers to God the firstfruits of that Blood which He will shed for them on Calvary.

The Circumcision of her Son means much to Mary; she sees Him suffer; she hears His cry of pain; she sees the Blood flow; and she understands that to be the Mother of God means being the *Mater Dolorosa*; and now she has fresh matter for her Meditations. Her Son is to be the Victim for sin, and she unites her sacrifice to His.

The rite of Circumcision was to the Jew a sign of the Covenant that God had made with his nation—it marked him out as one of God's own people; it was a mark of his dependence on God, and also of his slavery to sin till God set him free.

"Circumcision is that of the heart," St Paul tells us, "in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Rom. ii. 29.) By assisting with Mary

at the Circumcision of her Son, I mean that I want to understand something of this circumcision of the *heart*—understand, that is, that GOD has made a covenant with me, that I belong to Him, and am dependent on Him; I mean that I am ready with the knife of mortification to cut away all that prevents me from being a good servant, ready to "resist unto blood," if need be, but, at any rate, ready to make myself a victim with JESUS, as Mary did, willing to suffer anything which He calls upon me to suffer.

Point II.—HIS NAME—JESUS

His Name was chosen by His Heavenly Father, and revealed both to Mary and Joseph before His birth—to Mary by the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, and to Joseph by the Angel who was sent to allay his suspicions about his wife. JESUS—the "name which is above every name"! GOD gave it Him because "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death—even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.) He earned His Name by the Cross, and it was given Him at the moment when He shed the first drops of His Precious Blood. He could have allowed this first shedding of His Blood to redeem the world, had He so willed. He could have made it the *redeeming* Blood, but it was not yet His Will; His time had not yet come; He wished to live and to suffer long years on earth before He shed the Blood which He intended to be efficacious for the Redemption of the world. "Thou shalt call His Name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." (St Matt. i. 21.) And when at length He did shed His redeeming Blood on Calvary, there was a title nailed to the Cross, proclaiming His Name to all: "This is JESUS," the Saviour. He is saving His people from their sins.

It cost Him much to be the Saviour, and it cost Mary much to be the Mother of the Saviour; but both cheerfully

made the sacrifice in advance—both entered into GOD'S plan for my salvation. JESUS had come to do His Father's will—He was content to do it—and His Mother was content to be identified in everything with her Son, and to say her *Fiat*. If my salvation cost JESUS and Mary so much, ought it not to cost me something too? Would it be fair if all were easy and smooth for me? Surely not. Surely, if I have a part in the Saviour, I ought to have a part in His Cross. Let the thought of the Holy Babe shedding His first drops of Blood on His Mother's knee brace me up to meet suffering, of whatever kind GOD chooses for me; let it hush my murmurs and my discontent; let it make me not only willing but anxious to suffer, and thus to have an opportunity of being like Him, Who was in such a hurry to shed His Blood, that it seemed as though it were too long for Him to wait till Calvary. He must make the sacrifice in advance, and offer at any rate the firstfruits of His Blood to His Father.

Colloquy with Mary, who is identifying herself with the sufferings, intentions, and desires of her Son. Teach me, my Mother, not only to expect but to appreciate suffering. How can I be like JESUS, and a child of thine without it? I want to look upon it always as a sign of love, as a sign that I am recognised as one of the Holy Family.

Resolution. To understand that my very existence on earth means suffering, and that my identification with JESUS and Mary means suffering willingly and cheerfully.

Spiritual Bouquet. "I come to do Thy Will, O my GOD."

Her Purification

"They carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord."

1*st Prelude.* JESUS, Mary, and Joseph going to the Temple.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to go too, and learn the lessons.

Point I.—MARY'S PURIFICATION

It is the fortieth day after the birth of her Son, the day when it is Mary's turn to keep the legal observances, and so to identify herself in all things with her Son. There is no need for her to be purified, before she is allowed to enter GOD'S Temple; neither is there any need for her to present her Firstborn in the Temple and pay the ransom money for Him, for His Name is Saviour and He is Himself the Ransom for His people. There is no *need*; but Mary gladly does both, that she may enter more closely into the spirit of her Son, Who had undergone the rite of circumcision.

How many unnecessary humiliations and unpleasant duties do I undertake just for the sake of identifying myself with JESUS and Mary, and sharing their spirit?

We may imagine the Holy Family quietly setting out for their two hours' walk to the Temple, attracting no more notice than was usually attached to an event so common. Passing remarks were probably made as to its being the first time she was out; as to the disparity in their age; as to their poverty, for Joseph was carrying two doves, the offering of the poor, to be offered by Mary for her Purification.

Ah, how little the world sees! Extraordinary things are going on, though they are hidden, as is ever GOD'S wont, under things most ordinary. Mary, the purest of creatures, the Virgin of virgins, the Queen of Heaven, of Angels and of men, is bearing in her arms the Lord of glory, Who is on His way to visit His Temple for the first

time, and thus to fill it with a greater glory than ever Solomon's Temple had possessed. Angels are worshipping and adoring at every step of that journey, and presently they will throw open wide the gate of the Temple to let the King of Glory in. And the humble and silent Joseph is playing a part which no Jew before or since has ever played; for though the verdict of the world is that he is too poor to afford to take a lamb, in reality he is too rich to need one, for is he not bringing to the Temple the Lamb of GOD—an offering which no one has ever been rich enough to make before? Let us try to see things and judge them from GOD'S point of view—not from the world's.

Point II.—THE PRESENTATION OF HER SON

This involved three sacrifices. (1) The sacrifice made by JESUS. *Ecce Venio.* "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my GOD." He has come to the Temple to offer Himself as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to His Father. This is the morning sacrifice—the evening sacrifice will be on Calvary. This is like the *Offertory* at Mass, when the Priest offers to GOD the Bread and Wine which He will use presently to accomplish the sacrifice at the Consecration. He is the "Firstborn amongst many brethren," (Rom. viii. 29), that is why He must be presented in the Temple. He is our Elder Brother. He represents us all, and answers to GOD for all those who are united to Him. He offers Himself as a Ransom that all the rest of the family may go free.

Am I prepared to ratify this offering that my Elder Brother made in my name? Have I any right to claim the privileges? Yes, if I am united with Him, identified with Him; if I am saying as He did: "Behold, I come to do Thy Will," and this in the little sacrifices of my every-day life.

(2) The sacrifice made by Mary. *Ecce ancilla.* "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." Mary knows perfectly

well what she is doing when she puts her JESUS into the arms of the Priest. She knows that she is offering to GOD the firstfruits—the earnest of what is to come; and she makes her sacrifice whole-heartedly, zealously, lovingly. She said her *Fiat* at the Incarnation, and she will never take it back. She is His Mother—it is with Blood drawn from her veins that He will one day redeem the world; and she offers to GOD now, not only the Victim Who is to be the Redeemer, but herself as a co-victim—herself to suffer with Him. "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord"—ready to give Him all that He requires. How perfectly Mary identifies herself with JESUS! It is her intense love which enables her to copy so exactly.

(3) The sacrifice made by Joseph. *Ecce adsum.* "Behold, I am here too, ready for any sacrifice." Joseph is so closely connected with JESUS and Mary that he must share their spirit and do what they do. But his sacrifice is made in the dark, as ours are for the most part. He does not know what JESUS and Mary are doing. He cannot gauge the extent of their sacrifices—enough for him to unite his intention with theirs, and to offer with perfect detachment his two treasures to GOD, begging Him to use them as He will. Am I ready to make my sacrifice—even a blind one—ready to say: *Ecce adsum*—"Behold, here I am"—and to trust where I cannot understand?

Point III.—THE FIRST DOLOUR

The sacrifice was no sooner made than GOD took Mary at her word. Simeon, holding "the Christ of the Lord" in his arms, called Him "the *salvation* which Thou hast prepared; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." And while His father and mother were wondering at these things which were spoken concerning Him, Simeon addressed himself to "Mary His Mother," and spoke in no hidden language

of the Passion; and the sword pierced her soul, for though she knew it all, it was the first time she had heard it from the lips of another. It was the first of the *Seven Dolours.* She heard that her Child was to be :—

1. "... *for the fall of many*": that is, the *ruin* of many. What a lifelong sorrow for the heart of Mary to know that for many her Son's Passion would be in vain—that He was to be the "touchstone," with the result that, in many cases, He would be "rejected of men"!

2. "... *for a sign which shall be contradicted.*" War was to be waged against Him in all places, and that to the end of time. This was the treatment He, Who had come to be the Saviour and the Light of the World, was to receive.

And then Simeon added: "*Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*" He identified Mary with her Son, and spoke not only of His Passion but of her Compassion. The Queen of Sorrows was now on her throne; there was no longer any doubt about it. GOD had accepted her sacrifice. JESUS was the Victim, and she was His Mother—the Mater Dolorosa.

But Simeon's prophecy was not the last word that Mary was to hear before she left the Temple courts, which she loved so well. GOD, Who in His love had permitted the wound, had provided also some balm to be poured into it. A little act of courtesy was waiting for Mary to do before she was free to ponder over all that had happened in the Temple, and especially over the new revelation which had stabbed her to the quick. Well did old Anna, the Prophetess, know the maiden whose happy childhood had been spent in the Temple! How gladly Mary went up to her and renewed her friendship with her! How proud she was to show her little Son to her! Mary was wondering how much Anna knew; but she did not speak, she revealed nothing. Soon she found out that the holy old woman had been rewarded for her fasting and prayers

and vigils, by a special revelation, in consequence of which she "confessed to the Lord and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel." And Mary heard, and balm was poured into that first sword-wound.

Can I, sweet Mother of Sorrows, pour balm into that terrible wound? I cannot bear to think of thee going home, pressing thy Babe against thy aching heart. Let me accompany thee; I will keep close to thee, and I will speak continually of thy Child. Never will I speak against Him—to me, at least, He shall not be a contradiction, but a resurrection from all from which He has come to save me.

Colloquy with Mary, about the *Fourth Joyful Mystery*, and the *First Dolour*.

Resolution. To throw in my lot with JESUS and Mary.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Ecce adsum."

Wise Men and Babes

"*Thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged when the strength of the Gentiles shall come to Thee.*" (Isaias lx. 5.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture of the Wise Men.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to understand that nearness to JESUS and Mary means the Cross.

Point I.—THE WISE MEN

Mary had much to meditate about as she turned her steps homewards to Bethlehem. She knew, for the Angels had said so at His birth, that her Son was to be the Saviour for "all the people"; but Simeon in his song of praise had gone further, and said that He was to be for "all peoples," emphasising the fact that He was to be "a light to the revelation of the *Gentiles*." And so the subjects to ponder over were ever increasing, and Mary's heart was ever enlarging. She had now

to pray for the great world outside, as well as for GOD'S chosen people. Thus was her heart being prepared to receive the next worshippers at the shrine of the Infant GOD, and it may be that when they arrived—perhaps soon after the first anniversary of her Son's birth—it was no surprise to her that they were *Gentiles*. "Gentiles shall walk in Thy light, and kings in the brightness of Thy rising; they shall come from afar, bringing gold and frankincense and showing forth praise to the Lord." (Isaias lx. 3–6.) All this was fulfilled in the little house at Bethlehem. The Wise Men, firstfruits of the Gentile world, had had faith enough to overcome every obstacle, and during their journey of, perhaps, some months, had had but one idea—namely, to follow the star which GOD had put in the heavens for them, and by its means to find the new King, Who was to be their Saviour. Mary's prayers had no doubt helped them to make light of their many difficulties, and when their star had brought them right to the house which they sought, "they entered in and found the Child with Mary, His Mother." They were quite at home at once; their faith was so strong, that the unexpected surroundings and the poverty did not strike them as incongruous. They had found what they sought, and their joy and satisfaction were complete. As soon as they were in the Real Presence their conversion was an accomplished fact. Mary showed them her Child, "and falling down they adored Him." It was to *Mary* that they offered their gifts out of gratitude for all that the Holy Child, to Whom they felt that they now belonged, had done for them. It was *Mary* whom they thanked for her gracious hospitality. It was *Mary* who guided the little Hand to bless them ere they took their departure. It was to *Mary* that they explained that from henceforth their lives would be devoted to the service of the new King and the spreading of His kingdom among the Gentiles. It was *Mary*, the Mother

of the Way, who bade them Godspeed on their journey. How interested she was in those first great converts from the Gentiles! How their visit widened her outlook, and enlarged her maternal heart!

She is not less interested now in converts than she was then. She has been praying for them ever since. "Mary's prayers shall bring them back." Let us remember this when we are dealing with them; we are not working alone. Mary, the great advocate, is pleading with Her Son. Let us bring them, as often as we can, into the Real Presence—they may be all unconscious, but *He* is not. He will act upon them. Virtue will go out of Him to them: they will not go empty away, for it is impossible for them to be under the direct rays of His Presence without being influenced.

Point II.—The Baby Martyrs

Their visit over, the three Kings took leave of the Holy Child and His Mother, and, warned by God not to go and give their good news to Herod, they returned to their country by another way. This so exasperated Herod that he gave an order which plunged not only Bethlehem but all the neighbourhood into the most profound grief and desolation. How the heart of Mary went out in sympathy to the bereaved mothers! How big her heart felt as it dilated to take them all in! She understood now what it meant to be the Mother of Sorrows, and that only by having this title could she have the other—*Consolatrix afflictorum* (Consoler of the afflicted). How quickly Simeon's prophecy was being fulfilled! Her Son was already a sign being contradicted, in those Hebrew mothers and their innocent babes. Each mother was sacrificing her babe that Mary might not have to sacrifice hers. Each babe was giving its life to save the life of Jesus. Their sufferings were all because of Jesus and Mary. How the sword pierced Mary's heart as she heard

the bitter cries of mothers and children! "Poor banished children of Eve," born to sorrow and trouble! But from henceforth their cause will be espoused by a "most gracious Advocate," who will take a special interest in all troubles and sufferings that come to her children on account of the sacrifices that they make for her Son, or which are caused by their nearness to Him. At that moment of anguish the Jewish mothers *were* making a sacrifice, though it was an unwilling one and made in ignorance. GOD, in His mercy, rewards even such. Had their children lived, they might have been among the murderers of JESUS; now they are saved from all sin, they escape Purgatory, and, the first to give their lives for Him, they will follow the Lamb for ever. Happy little Innocents! Happy those who have the honour to be their mothers! Happy all those who make the least sacrifice for Him! And happy, thrice happy, the Queen of Martyrs, who is now entering into the possession of her new kingdom!

The more closely I am identified with JESUS and Mary, the more I must expect suffering. The training for the kingdom is the same, whether for Wise Men or Babes. The Wise Men learnt from the child on Mary's knee to view suffering in a new light, and they went back to their country prepared to sacrifice all for the Child and His Mother, shrinking from nothing till they laid down their lives for Him Whose star they had so diligently followed. So Simeon's sword is piercing; the Cross is already showing that the followers of the Babe are to be victims too—all is getting clearer and clearer to Mary, and as she wonders her heart is enlarged.

Colloquy with Mary.

Resolution. To follow the generosity of the Wise Men and the Babes.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Mater Dolorosa, Consolatrix afflictorum, Regina Martyrum, ora pro nobis."

Egypt

"*That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spake by the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt have I called My Son.*" (St Matt. ii. 15.)

1*st Prelude.* Picture of JESUS, Mary, and Joseph.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to believe that no circumstances in which GOD has placed me can hinder my spiritual life.

Point I.—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Only one child escaped the cruel sword of Herod, and that one was Mary's Son. He was safe in the arms of His Mother, who was fleeing with Him into Egypt, with an anguish of heart so great that it constituted the *Second Dolour*. But no design of Herod, however powerful and clever, could touch that life before His hour was come. The child knew it, and His Mother knew it—yet they fled from those who sought His life; for in all things Mary's Son must be made like unto His brethren. He could have protected Himself, had He so wished, without giving so much trouble and anxiety to His parents. He heard "Rachel bewailing her children"; He heard the cry of each one of those little Innocents, who was giving his life for Him—yet He did not raise a finger to prevent all the misery, because He had come to do His Father's Will, and He left all in His Hands; and also because He is our model, and He was showing us how to act. He wants us to have a perfect acquiescence in GOD'S Will, a boundless confidence, a profound peace, and even *joy*, in the midst of the most trying and perplexing circumstances. He wants us to lie quiet in GOD'S arms, as He lay in His Mother's, content to know nothing except that GOD'S will is being done.

He who knew least about it all, and yet had apparently to take the chief part and bear all the anxiety, was Joseph. He it was who received the warning message from the

Angel; he it was who had to break the news to Mary that the Child's life was in danger and that they must fly immediately—even in the middle of the night. He it was who took the Child and His Mother into Egypt, in accordance with what to anyone else but Joseph would have seemed a very arbitrary and unreasonable command. But those who live their lives close to JESUS and Mary do not criticise GOD'S dealings: such an idea never occurs to them; they have only one thing to do—to obey. When a criticising, discontented spirit comes over me, I shall find that the reason is always the same—I have not been keeping close to JESUS and Mary.

How much Mary suffers during that long journey across the desert—anxiety, fatigue, hunger, thirst, want of shelter! But it is all on account of her Son; the sword is piercing her heart every day, but the Babe is pressed against the wounds. Angels are following and longing to help their Queen, but they cannot without a permission from their little Master, and the permission will not be given, for He and His Mother have made their sacrifice—they have laid themselves on the Altar as victims and are already being consumed; and the desert is rejoicing and flourishing like the lily, (Isaias xxxv. 1), because Mary with her child is passing through it. O Mary, look upon thy children who are crossing the desert of this world. The wilderness has lost all its terrors since thou with thy Son didst pass through it. Thou knowest its difficulties and its hardships; "turn, then, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed Fruit of thy womb, JESUS."

Point II.—THE LAND OF EGYPT

Mary now finds herself in a heathen land, and her interest in the Gentiles must have greatly increased. But her heart is also enlarged in another direction—

namely, towards the Jews of the Dispersion. Legend tells us that it was at Heliopolis, one of the cities where the Egyptian Jews lived and where they had built a Temple, that the Holy Family took up their abode while they stayed in Egypt. What a blessing and a joy to those faithful souls to have the Holy Family living amongst them! How it must have stirred up their zeal and courage! It may have been Mary's influence on many a mother's heart, and the influence of JESUS on many a little playmate, which produced in after years some of the great preachers to the Gentiles who came from amongst the Jews of the Dispersion.

It was not for nothing that Mary and her Son were sent into Egypt. GOD has His reasons, though He does not often reveal them, because He loves to have our confidence.

Now, for a time—*perhaps* only for a few months, for Herod died soon after the slaughter of the Innocents—Egypt was the centre of the world; nobody guessed it, but the Angels were there worshipping, adoring, wondering. It is a true picture of the Blessed Sacrament, hidden away in so many Tabernacles, surrounded by people who do not suspect Its presence. It is nothing to thousands who pass by. But what is It to those who know? What was JESUS to Mary in the land of her exile? He was her all—*with Him* exile was no exile; *with Him* GOD'S Will was easy, GOD'S arrangements the best; *with Him* it was impossible to complain, impossible to have any regrets about the past, or impatient wonderings about the future. She was absorbed in the present, because she had JESUS with her. He had to be taken care of, fed, taught, thought about, worked for, lived for. What a lesson for those who are inclined to look upon their surroundings as *Egypt*, who say too readily: "How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?" (Ps. cxxxvi. 4.) How can I do this or that *here*?

It was in Egypt that the Child grew, and it was there that Mary heard His first words, watched His first tottering steps, and taught Him His first (vocal) prayers. And while her Child grew in wisdom and age, Mary was growing too—growing in grace and virtue; imbibing more and more of the spirit of her Son from the services she rendered to Him; making great progress in her new school, the school of the Cross; getting daily more food for meditation and prayer; enlarging her heart and preparing herself to be a second Eve—the Mother of all living.

It *is* possible, then, to grow in Egypt! And not only is it *possible*, but if GOD sends me there, it is the soil most suitable for my growth at that particular epoch of my life. How many of GOD'S children have had to live in uncongenial surroundings, and with those who have no sympathy with their faith, from the earliest confessors and martyrs to the present-day converts to the Faith! If JESUS had spent all His lifetime in the Holy Land, such might have been tempted to say: "He is my Model, but He was never in my circumstances!" But no, JESUS spent some time with His Mother in Egypt, and he *grew* there.

Let me learn the lesson that GOD is with me wherever I am and in whatever circumstances; and let me try to copy Mary in being so absorbed by Him, and by all that I have to do for Him, in the person of His "least brethren," that my surroundings matter little.

Point III.—THE RETURN FROM EGYPT

"Be thou there until I shall tell thee," was the only order given to Joseph—there was no hint of how long the time would be; and so Mary said her *Fiat* each day, ready either to stay in Egypt or to go back to her own land—both were the same to her as long as they were the expression of GOD'S Will. At last the Angel came

again with a message: "Arise and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead that sought the life of the Child." Their own dear land, then, was no longer dangerous to them. GOD gave His reasons this time—but when He does not, what then? Then my faith must be strong enough to believe that the fair land, which looks as if it would be so congenial, holds dangers for me which Egypt does not; there are enemies there who seek after my soul to destroy it, and whom I can only escape by the hard discipline of Egypt. Then I will be thankful for Egypt as long as it lasts, and thankful, too, that my life—every detail of it—is arranged for me by one who *knows*.

And so the faces of Mary and JESUS were set towards the land of Israel—and to them both it meant Calvary. Mary would doubtless have preferred to take her Son back to Bethlehem, and bring Him up near the Temple, but again the warning voice told them that it was not GOD'S will. And so they "retired into the quarters of Galilee," and Mary found herself back again in Nazareth—the city of so many memories; and two more of the prophecies concerning her Son have been fulfilled: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," and, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Colloquy. O Mary, get thy child grace to learn some of the precious lessons that Egypt has to teach—that blind obedience and submission which bring perfect rest; that waiting for GOD'S orders without any complaining, or impatience, or suggestions of something else; that quiet uniting of all sufferings with those of JESUS; that entire acquiescence in all His plans for me.

Resolution. To put no obstacle in the way of GOD'S direction of me to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee."

Mary's Fifth Word

"*And His Mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.*" (St Luke ii. 48.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture of Mary and Joseph finding JESUS in the Temple.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to seek JESUS as Our Lady sought Him.

Point I.—THE LOSS OF HER SON

Once more the Holy Family has come up to the Temple; and it is here that Mary speaks her next recorded word. Her Son was not yet born when she spoke her last. Since then He has been her constant companion through infancy and boyhood, in trouble and in joy, at Bethlehem, in Egypt, and at Nazareth. He is twelve years old now, and counts under the law as a man; it is time to decide His calling in life. He is old enough to go with His parents to the Passover Feast at Jerusalem. So once again the real Passover Lamb goes up to His Temple; and we can think of Mary and Joseph praying there to the Child Who is kneeling between them, Mary pondering over her last visit to the Temple with Him, when she presented Him to the Lord as a little baby and when the sword pierced her soul for the first time.

When it was all over, the Child JESUS "remained in Jerusalem," without saying anything to His parents! It was only when they halted for the night that Mary and Joseph would find out their loss, for the men and women left the Temple by different gates, and the children might go with either group. Mary had lost her Child! It was the third of the *Seven Dolours*, and it has been revealed to the Saints that her spiritual desolation was greater than that ever experienced by any of GOD'S children. Not only was she suffering intense desolation, but her grief was enhanced by the fear that He had left her because she had done something of which He did not approve. She also had to

bear the sight of her dearly loved spouse "sorrowing," perhaps blaming himself for his want of care, and in any case not so well able as she to bear the anxiety and grief. Mary shows us how to act in our times of desolation. Diligently she searched for Him during those three days, "in the company among their kinsfolks and acquaintance," and in all the places where He had been. Then they retraced their steps to Jerusalem. No time was lost, no pains were spared; they sought Him sorrowing for His loss, and for any fault that might be theirs. How JESUS loves to be sought thus! It is one of His reasons for hiding Himself, to force us back to the company where we enjoyed His presence, to the places where we had Him with us, and to everything that reminds us of what He said to us and what we said to Him. He is not far from the souls that thus seek Him.

Point II.—THEY FOUND HIM IN THE TEMPLE

It was the most natural place to find Him. Do I in my times of desolation turn instinctively to His House, where I know that He is hidden? Do I feel that I must spend all the time I possibly can close to the Tabernacle, that my body, at any rate, may be near to Him, while my spirit is calling out in its distress: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"

Who can measure what must have been Mary's joy and relief when she saw her Son sitting in the midst of the doctors, listening to their teaching! She "wondered"; she was perplexed; and then it was that she uttered her fifth word. It was a word of reproach rather than of joy, though it was joy that caused it, and the reproach was full of tenderness. St Bernardine calls this word, *flamma amoris saporantis*, "a flame of savouring or relishing love," because, he says, it belongs to love to "distinguish and discern, and, as it were, taste the divine effects and qualities of that which is loved." It was her love which made Mary

savour the intense pain caused by the absence of her Son and by the anxiety of her spouse. The flame of love within her enabled her to *relish* both the love and the pain. Mary does not try to conceal her pain—that is not the outcome of true love. She says straight out what she is feeling, with that holy familiarity to which her love gives her a right: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Why? None knew better than He what the agony of those three days had been to His Mother, and He could have prevented it. Why, then, has He done so? Because He was beginning the principle which He carried out all through. He was the "Man of Sorrows," and she was the "Mother of Sorrows," and He would not spare her one drop in the cup of suffering. He knew its value too well, and His love for her was too great.

When we have to undergo suffering that seems so unnecessary and that could (perhaps we think) with a little forethought have been so easily avoided, instead of allowing ourselves to give way to discontent, and regrets, and even rebellion, how much better it would be to say: Yes, it is quite true, JESUS could have prevented this, but He is treating me in some degree as He treated His Blessed Mother, not saving me the pain and trouble and inconvenience, but letting me have the opportunity of sanctifying my soul and of gaining greater merit. "Why hast Thou done so?" And He answers: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" By His answer He prepares His Mother for the future; He raises her above the human in Him to the Divine; He announces Himself, though obscurely, to the Doctors as the Messias; He teaches the great lesson of detachment, and shows that even our best natural affections must be supernaturalised. "My Father's business"—that must ever come first. "For this came I into the world," (St John xviii. 37), and I *must* be about it, even if by so doing I give pain to those dearest to me.

They were her Son's first recorded words, and Mary "understood" them not; they were words full of mystery and full of meaning; her mingled feelings of pain and relief, of sorrow and joy, would prevent her from seeing the gist of their meaning at once; but as time went on, and her spiritual horizon increased, she would understand more and more what His "Father's business" was, though perhaps not till she stood at the Foot of the Cross did she understand the words in all their fulness.

"*Why hast Thou done so?*" It is a question Mary often puts to her other children—sometimes in surprise and amazement, sometimes in anxiety and sorrow, sometimes in love and tenderness. Well for us if we can always answer, like our Elder Brother: The "Father's business." This is an answer which will always satisfy the flame of love within her which prompts the question,

Colloquy with Mary, asking for grace that I may be so taken up with my "Father's business" that I cause her no anxiety.

Resolution. To put my "Father's business" first, to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Why hast Thou done so to us?"

Nazareth

"*And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And His Mother kept all these words in her heart. And* Jesus *advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.*" (St Luke ii. 52.)

1*st Prelude.* Jesus, Mary, and Joseph going back to Nazareth.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to go there too, and to study its lessons.

Point I.—Mary with JESUS and Joseph

The lesson has been given now; Jesus has shown His parents that He is the Son of God before He is the Son

of Mary; that GOD'S will, and GOD'S business, and GOD'S work, are the reasons for His being on earth. Now, because He is perfect man, He will live for eighteen years in subjection to His parents, to show us that subjection is one of GOD'S laws; that the Father's business can only be done by a perfect submission to His will and to His orders, expressed and given by those under whom His providence places us. All the direction needed for the spiritual life is contained in these two sentences: "*I must be about My Father's business,*" and "*He was subject to them.*" The Father's business is to be done in His way —not in mine; it will only be done by a perfect submission of my will to His, by subjection all along the line, by the crushing of self.

His Mother kept all these words in her heart. As she went home she was pondering and meditating again. She had no need to make a "*Composition of Place,*" as she had to do a few hours ago, for her Boy was at her side once again; it was upon His words that she was meditating. They had made her realise that He was a man now, that He would have "business" to do that she must no longer expect wholly to understand. No doubt she prepared herself in her meditation to be ready from henceforth to find that His sweet, childish, obedience was over. Just as we, in our meditations, make the sacrifice beforehand about something that we dread, and then when we come up to it during the day, it is not there! But GOD is pleased, nevertheless, that we made our sacrifice. One of the many uses of meditation is that we may be forearmed for the day's battles. So it was with Mary. When she got back to Nazareth, it is true that there was a change; it is true that the boyhood of her Son was fast passing into manhood; but His subjection was the same—only it was far more touching to His Mother's heart just because He was no longer a child.

And what was Mary's part? If JESUS was "subject,"

Mary had to command; if JESUS obeyed, it was because Mary gave her orders—and this till He was thirty years old! What an absolute repression of self and of her own ideas there must have been in Mary before she could bring herself to give an order to Him Whom she was worshipping as her GOD! With what reverence, and honour, and humility, and searchings of heart, and preparation, and care she would give her orders! Only the knowledge that it was His wish that she should stand in GOD'S place to Him, could have given her courage. Her authority over Him was GOD'S authority, and it was only by constantly referring it to GOD that she dared to maintain it.

What a lesson Mary gives here to parents and superiors and to all whose duty it is to command others! Whether they have to command the unruly and the unsubmissive, or those whom they know to be in every way superior to themselves, a few thoughts suggested by the contemplation of Mary commanding her Son at Nazareth may help to make easier a position which must often be irksome and difficult:—

1. GOD has put me into this position because He intends me to be His delegate.
2. My orders are all given in His Name, and all my authority refers back to Him.
3. My only sure weapons are—*humility*, that is, a real belief in my own weakness; and *self-effacement*, to the extent of letting those who are under me see, not me, but GOD, in my orders.
4. I must see JESUS in all whom I command. If they are thankless and unruly, they are nevertheless amongst His "least brethren," and He wants them trained to live with their Elder Brother in His Father's house. If they are already so like Him in their docility and humility that the very sight of them makes me adore GOD in them,

I will remember that Mary gave her orders to JESUS because GOD wished it; and that thought will give me courage to be His faithful representative and to give those under my care every possible opportunity of advancing in wisdom and grace by the submission of their will.

5. I must be firmly persuaded that GOD never puts anyone into a position without giving the grace to fill it. Mary needed far more grace to command JESUS than ever I shall need!

Point II.—MARY A WIDOW

Neither sacred nor profane history gives the exact date of that sad day in Mary's life when death deprived her of her beloved spouse. Joseph had shared all Mary's sacred joys and sorrows from her school-days. He it was who had trained her Son in His work as a carpenter; and to him alone could she speak freely of Him. What a wonderfully happy and blessed death must have been St Joseph's—the last people he saw, JESUS and Mary; his last messages given to JESUS and Mary; all he had to leave, left to JESUS and Mary; the last words he heard, those of JESUS and Mary! He is the *Patron of a good death*: that is, he will help those who invoke him, to die with JESUS and Mary.

And now from henceforth Mary will have no one to talk to about her Son, no one to share her joy in all these new lessons which she is ever learning from Him. But, on the other hand, from henceforth her Son will be her *all*. He, who later raised the dead man because "he was the only son of his mother and she was a widow," knew how to wipe away the tears from His Mother's eyes. He knew how to be to her more than a husband. From henceforth the Son and the Mother were all in all to each other—He her sole support, and she keeping the little

home for Him alone. They were alone for their meals, and alone in the evenings when the day's work was done. It may have been during those blessed evenings that JESUS explained to Mary what His "Father's business" was, so that she might understand all about it; that He unfolded to her the wonderful plan of Redemption; that He told her about His public life, about the Church that He was going to found, and which she was to nurse during its infancy. Perhaps He told her, too, of the extension of the Incarnation—His great secret, the Blessed Sacrament. Who had a greater right to know it than Mary, through whose means the Incarnation took place? And as the time of the Hidden Life drew to a close, He would explain to her that His "Father's business" was calling Him away from Nazareth, that He would have to give up His home and His life with her, but that they would still work together for the Redemption of the world, their interests would still be one. Oh, blessed converse! The secrets of JESUS and Mary! More than ever was her heart being enlarged; more than ever would she have need to ponder these things in her heart. With the undivided attention of such a Master, what progress she must have made in virtue and in grace!

Point III.—MARY ALONE

But the day came at last when her Son was to leave their little home. Mary knew that it would come; again she had made her sacrifice beforehand, and she was ready. She was saying her *Fiat* while Simeon's ever-active sword was piercing her heart. There was the last meal, the last kiss, the last blessing—and He was gone. She watched Him till He was out of sight and then turned to her empty house. It would never be the same again. Never again would she have Him all to herself. But Mary was a "valiant woman," and no grief of hers would spoil her

Son's work. Three thoughts supported her in her trial; and the same three will support us in our trials too.

1. This separation was GOD'S will—and that was always dearer to Mary than *anything* else.
2. The very sacrifice of her Son that she was called upon to make, was a proof of her union with Him and with His interests.
3. The knowledge that the separation was no real separation.

It is true that never again will He come in from His work and share the simple meal with her; true that there will be no more talking over their plans together; but such a perfect union as theirs cannot be broken by separation. Does not everything in the house speak of Him? Mary has had her time of *consolation*; now she is to have her time of *desolation*. Let me learn from her how to act under these changed conditions, which are sure to be mine at some time or other in my life. How does Mary act? Does she sit still and mourn over the days that are gone? Not at all. She acts as though they were *not* gone; as though there were no difference between consolation and desolation; there *is* no difference really, but faith and love must be very strong before this fact can be grasped. Mary does her work as usual with her Son and for her Son. Her heart is with Him all the time; everything reminds her of Him, and she is thinking of Him, talking to Him, telling him everything just as she did before. How far am I like her?

"Sedes sapientiæ, ora pro nobis."

Colloquy with Mary, asking her to get me grace to ponder over these wonderful mysteries.

Resolution. Never to allow myself to make any change in my spiritual life during a time of desolation.

Spiritual Bouquet. "He was subject to them."

Mary's Sixth Word

"*The Mother of* Jesus *saith to Him: They have no wine.*" (St John ii. 3.)

1*st Prelude.* The Marriage Feast.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to remember the interest that Mary takes in her children.

Point I.—"THEY HAVE NO WINE"

It looks, from the context, as though Our Blessed Lady were staying in the house at Cana where the wedding feast took place, for while St John tells us that JESUS and His disciples were *invited,* he says that "the Mother of JESUS was *there.*" We need not suppose that she remained long at Nazareth after her Son began His public ministry—it is more probable that she stayed with friends in the neighbourhood of His work. After this first miracle of her Son's, she went with Him and His disciples to Capharnaum, but "remained there not many days," St John tells us. (chap. ii. 12.) At all events, she was at Cana at the time of the marriage feast, and it may be that it was in St John's house that she was staying; for there is a very old tradition which tells that the bridegroom was none other than John himself. If the tradition be true, it lends an additional significance to this sixth word of Our Lady; for, as St Bernardine suggests, it would probably be the miracle produced by this word which made him decide to give up the wedded state, even before he had entered upon it, for one of perpetual virginity —a decision which endeared him to the hearts of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

Eighteen years had passed since Mary's last recorded word. It was spoken to Our Lord Himself, as also was this one. St Bernardine calls the sixth word "a word of compassionating love" (*flamma amoris compatientis*). We shall see why as we continue our meditation.

It is not difficult to picture that little family feast in which JESUS and Mary took part. Their presence produced, as it ever must, joy, peace, and harmony. But now, apparently, there was going to be a hitch in the proceedings; Mary's watchful eyes noticed that the wine was running short; she wanted to save the newly married pair from any confusion and humiliation that would spoil their mirth on this glad day, and she showed her *compassionating* love by anticipating their need.

Mary is the same now; she is full of compassionating love, pity, and thought for her children; she anticipates their needs and will save them, if possible, from the dangers which threaten them, by telling JESUS. What a comfort it should be to me to remember that I have a Mother in Heaven who is looking out for the difficulties and dangers which threaten me, and doing her best to avert them! How far am I like my Mother in this? Do I, by my tact and forethought and observation, try to smooth away difficulties and avert little unpleasantnesses that I see lying in the path of another? To what extent is this *flamma amoris compatientis* burning in me? Do others feel that if I am there, not only will there be more joy and mirth, but also more harmony and good feeling—in short, that things are sure to run smoothly, because one of Mary's children—"a child of Mary"—is there. "The Mother of JESUS was there."

Point II.—THE ANSWER OF JESUS

JESUS, too, had noticed that the wine was running short, and He knew that He was going to work a wonderful miracle of transubstantiation, foreshadowing the miracle worked at every Mass. He knew also that He would not work the miracle till His Mother had intervened. At Nazareth He made her a participator in all His work. Though separated from Him, she was still

to have her share; and her share was *prayer*—the great work of intercession. By this means, doubtless, she had had her share in her Son's Baptism, in the Fasting and Temptation in the wilderness, in the calling of the first six Apostles. Now, in this first miracle, He will give a lesson to these Apostles and show them the position His Mother is to occupy in His Church. She understands that He addresses her as "Woman" rather than as Mother, to show them that He, and they too, must be detached from all natural affections and ties. He has His Father's business to do, and they have been chosen to help Him in it, and she is acting in her *official* position as Intercessor. My hour for working this miracle is not yet come, but now that you have spoken it soon will come, seems to be the meaning of His answer. It was by this miracle that JESUS manifested forth His glory, "so that His disciples believed on Him."

And one of Mary's reasons for saying: "They have no wine," and thus asking for the miracle, may have been that she knew it would confirm the faith of the new Apostles in her Son.

What a loving, compassionating Mother she already is! How her heart is enlarging to take in all that concerns her Son — His work, His interests, His miracles, His Apostles! She notices the needs, and just hints them to JESUS; there is no need to explain and go into details; they understand each other—it is heart-to-heart work. If the flame of compassionating love is burning in her heart, it is because it has been lighted at the fire of the Sacred Heart.

In after years, especially during the Passion and after the Ascension, when the Apostles must so often have turned to Our Lady for consolation, help, and direction, how they would look back to the time of the feast in Cana of Galilee, when they heard her say her first *official* word: "They have no wine"! And how the remembrance

of it would strengthen their faith, not only in Him, in Whom from that moment they "believed," but also in her whom He had then so clearly pointed out as His co-worker, and as the one from whom they might expect help in their needs.

If Mary did so much for her children when she was on earth, without even being asked; and if she supplied needs, of which they were scarcely conscious, what will she not do now, when, as the great Intercessor at her Son's right hand in Heaven, she hears the entreaties of her children on earth? She still co-operates with JESUS; her work is still to find out the needs of her children and to tell Him of them. When I am in need, perplexity, or trouble, what a consolation and strength it would be to remember that this very need of mine is a subject of conversation between JESUS and Mary; and that, when His hour is come, her pleadings for me will be heard, and the need will be supplied!

Colloquy with the Mother of Compassion. "Mater misericordiæ, ora pro nobis."

Resolution. To try to-day to prevent little unpleasantnesses happening to others.

Spiritual Bouquet. "The Mother of JESUS was there."

Her Seventh Word

His Mother saith to the waiters: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." (St John ii. 5.)

1st *Prelude.* The Marriage Feast. Mary speaking to the waiters.

2nd *Prelude.* Grace to obey.

Point I.—LOVE'S CONSUMMATION—OBEDIENCE

The perfect understanding that existed between Mary and her Son made her quite sure from His answer that all would be well, that a miracle would be worked, and

the need supplied; and so she prepared the way for it by speaking her seventh recorded word. It is to the waiters that she speaks—to those whose work it is to minister to the needs of JESUS and His brethren. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." St Bernardine calls this word "a flame of consummating love," (*flamma amoris consummantis*), because Mary shows by it that her love for her Son and for all her other children is so great, that she desires that all should obey Him, and accomplish His commandments perfectly. She is not content with loving and serving Him herself, the flame of love that makes her own obedience so perfect, burns that others too may consummate their love by their obedience: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." If you want my Son to show you some special favour, be very careful about your obedience.

Mary's word is for *all* her children, but it is intended principally for the waiters, to whom it was primarily addressed. It is those who have, in any way, to minister to JESUS under the guise of His "least brethren," who have to remember so specially that they are to do only what *He* says—that they are only His agents waiting for His orders. How much better His servants would do their work if they carried out His Mother's direction, and did all that He says and only what He says! His "least brethren," who are sick, would never feel neglected, would never hear that impatient word which makes them long to get up, and wait on themselves, instead of being left to the tender mercies of the servants of JESUS and Mary! His "least brethren" who are tiresome and difficult to get on with—perhaps only because they are lonely and in need of sympathy—would be quite sure of never getting an unkind, cutting, or thoughtless word from those who are waiting on JESUS and Mary; it is what *He* saith that they will say and do—nothing else.

And amongst the waiters themselves there would be

no jealousies, and heart-burnings, and envyings, and criticisms; no thinking that others are preferred to them, that they are left out and taken no notice of, that their services are not wanted. The waiters would remember that they are waiting upon *His* Brethren, and that they have no right to do or say or plan anything that He does not tell them; and if He tells them nothing for the moment, and they have to stand by, and see others do His work, they are nevertheless His servants, waiting for His next orders.

"Whatsoever He shall say, do." Obedience, then, is love's consummation. Mary's love—strong flame though it is—cannot get beyond obedience; there is nothing higher; it is the proof, the crown, the consummation of love. When, for the moment, her request seems unheeded—even rejected—her consolation is: "Whatsoever He shall say" will be right; whatever it is, it will be the answer for me. "*Ecce ancilla Domini.*" Behold the servant waiting.

Point II.—Result—Water Changed to Wine

The waiters have not long to wait for their orders. When His Mother has prepared us and we are standing waiting ready to do "whatsoever" He shall say, the order is quite clear. We know exactly what He means, and what it is that He wants done; and though the order may seem unreasonable, and we run the risk of humiliating ourselves before others, yet we shall do it, for His Mother said: "Whatsoever." And by doing it we shall prove that our love, like hers, is a consummating love—a love that finds its consummation in obedience. This kind of love is like a fairy's wand; it changes all that it touches, water is wine everywhere—that is, we get the best out of everything; not perhaps immediately, or at any rate we are not so quick to *detect* the "good wine"

as the steward of the feast was; the path of obedience is often, as it was for Mary, a path beset with difficulty and sorrow; but love has touched it, the result is the same, the water *is* changed, and changed into "*good* wine." It would not be good for us to drink of it to the full now. GOD reserves the good wine till the end, and when we have well drunk of the cup of suffering and sorrow here, He will hand us the cup of joy that inebriates. Here we may only "*taste* and see that the Lord is sweet"; (Ps. xxxiii. 9); but one day, when the *flamma amoris consummantis* is perfected in us, when we have done all that He saith to us, and paid our debts even to "the last farthing," (St Matt. v. 26), then we shall drink to the full of the joy of His countenance, (Ps. xv. 11), and He will say: "I have inebriated the weary soul, and I have *filled* every hungry soul." (Jer. xxxi. 25.)

Colloquy with Our Lady, asking that I may always hear her voice telling me to obey her Son.

Resolution. To remember that obedience turns water into wine.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

Who is my Mother?

"*My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of GOD and do it.*" (St Luke viii. 21.)

1*st Prelude.* Our Lady standing waiting on the outskirts of the crowd.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to "hear the word of GOD and do it."

Point I.—HIS MOTHER STANDING WITHOUT

This one incident in which Mary is mentioned between the time of the Marriage at Cana and Holy Week, happened during the second year of her Son's ministry.

We do not know whether or not she had been near Him during this time. According to the opinion of some, she was one of the little band of women who followed Him about, to minister to His needs and those of His Apostles. But whether she followed Him actually or not, we know that her spirit was ever with Him, and that she followed Him with her prayers, and interest, and sympathy, *knowing* Him more as He manifested Himself more by His healing and miracles, and therefore *loving* Him and *imitating* Him more, and *therefore*, growing in grace, of which she was ever full. Such, we are quite sure, is a true picture of Mary, though this one instance at Capharnaum is the only occasion on which we are able to make an actual picture of her.

Her Son had probably come to Capharnaum for a rest after one of His missionary rounds; it may be that He had come to have a little time of refreshment with her. And she and His brethren—His relatives—went to meet Him, desiring to speak to Him. We are not told what it was that they were so anxious to tell Him. When they arrived He was already addressing a crowd which was *sitting* about Him, and which was so great that His Mother and His brethren could not get near Him; and so "they *stood* without"—on the outskirts—and thus attracted the notice of someone who attracted *His* notice; someone, in fact, who interrupted Him in the middle of His discourse, by telling Him that His Mother and His brethren wanted Him. Such is the simple incident, and by it Mary affords her Son the opportunity of giving two most important lessons to His Apostles, and also to those who would, during all time, have any kind of apostolic work to do.

Point II.—A Lesson on Interruptions

He is preaching, and He is interrupted. What does he do? Shows, as He had shown so clearly before, when he

was only twelve years old, that His "Father's business" must come first—that He is perfectly indifferent to all natural ties when that is concerned, and that His followers have got to be the same. He is preaching to the people—that is His work, and not even for a desire of His Mother will He interrupt it. He preaches by example what He had already preached by word: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me." (St Matt. x. 37.)

Incidentally, He shows us what we may do with our interruptions. We are so prone to let them worry us, to think that they spoil our work, to say: But for these endless interruptions, I could do so much more! What did our Lord do with His interruption, which was a very real one, and far more disturbing than are many of ours of which we complain so readily? He turned it into good use, so that His work was the gainer by it and not the loser. If we cannot always follow His example literally by making the interruption a *direct* help to our work, we can always make it help *indirectly* by taking it as a message from GOD, Who would give His Apostle an opportunity of practising patience, self-control, and self-repression. Our work will gain more by these divinely planned interruptions than by the smooth, easy, methods which we had planned for ourselves.

Point III.—A LESSON ON RELATIONSHIPS

To the interrupter He said: "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" And, looking round on them who sat about Him, He saith: "Behold My mother and My brethren! For My mother and My brethren are they who hear the word of GOD and do it." It is the same lesson that He gave to the woman, who probably was one of the very crowd He was now addressing, and who could not

refrain from proclaiming before everyone the *blessedness* of His Mother. To her He said: "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of GOD and keep it." (St Luke xi. 27, 28.) The lesson, then, is that He holds as His nearest and dearest those who do His Father's Will. His Mother was, it is true, dearer to Him than all besides, was, it is true, blessed above all women; but only because she did His Father's Will more perfectly than any other.

Who is My mother? Any of these in the crowd have as much right to Me as she has, if they do My Father's Will as she does it. This is the lesson that Mary is giving Him the opportunity of teaching.

Would I be dear to Him as His Mother was; would I have that close union of heart; would I see things from His point of view; would I be willing to be put in the background and kept standing there if it furthers the "Father's business"; would I be ready to suffer anything for the spread of His Kingdom? There is only one way—do as she did. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in Heaven, the same is My mother."

Colloquy with Mary standing in the background. Thou whose unique privilege it is to be the Mother of GOD, teach me to do His will in such a way that I may share in some degree thy *spiritual* maternity. This was thine by *detachment*—even from the visible presence of JESUS, by a perfect *performance of the will of GOD*, and by *suffering*. By thy ceaseless intercession help me to struggle ceaselessly till I know something of these three things.

Resolution. To prove my close relationship with JESUS and Mary to-day by the way I do GOD'S will.

Spiritual Bouquet. "His Mother stood without."

The Fourth and Fifth Dolours

"*And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*" (St Luke ii. 35.)

1*st Prelude.* (1) Mary meeting JESUS with His Cross.
(2) Mary witnessing the Crucifixion of Her Son.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to understand what a precious gift suffering is.

Point I.—MARY'S SUFFERING

Mary, with the knowledge which she had all her life of her Son's Passion, must have known when the hour was approaching. She had noticed the ever-increasing envy and hatred of the Chief Priests. She knew of the various attempts on His life, and of the organised plot to kill Him. And when the Passion itself began, we may be quite sure that, even if she were not actually a witness of some of the scenes, the Apostles kept her informed of what was going on. She would hear of the Agony in the Garden, of Judas' betrayal, of the desertion of the Apostles; then of the trials, of the scourging and crowning with thorns, of Pilate's vain attempts to save Him; *she* knew that they would be vain. And when at length the death sentence was passed, she set out with the other ministering women to be as near to Him as she could while He carried His Cross to Calvary. *Once*, at any rate, on the Way of the Cross they caught sight of each other, and had that unspeakable consolation which no one could give to JESUS but Mary, and no one to Mary but JESUS. But though it was a consolation, it was also an anguish so great, that this meeting of JESUS with His Blessed Mother is counted as one of the seven swords that pierced her heart. It is the *Fourth Dolour*. Then, on Calvary's hill, she must have heard, even if she did not see, the nails being driven in; and heard, too, something that gave her strength and courage at that terrible moment—her Son speaking to His Father, the crowning point of Whose "business" He had now reached: "Father, forgive them,

for they know not what they do." Who can measure what the pain of this *Fifth Dolour* was to Mary! What was it that gave her an almost superhuman courage? The firm belief that everything she saw and heard was GOD'S will; and such was the intensity with which she had said her *Fiat*, that His will was nearer to her even than her own sufferings. In proportion as this is the case with us shall we get the good that GOD intends out of suffering, and join, as Mary did, our prayers with those of JESUS by asking GOD'S forgiveness for all who cause us suffering.

Point II.—MARY'S SACRIFICE

Then, as soon as the darkness permitted her to draw near without observation, she allowed John to take her to the Foot of the Cross, and there took up her stand. Her sacrifice was very near to its completion now. This is what she meant when she said her *Fiat* to the Angel Gabriel thirty-three years ago. This is what she meant when she presented Him to the Lord when He was forty days old. The three days' loss, and the separation when He left His home at Nazareth, had been a foreshadowing of this. Now the consummation of her sacrifice had arrived: "And there stood by the Cross of JESUS His Mother"! She had never flinched, had never looked back. It had been *Fiat* all along the line. She was a "valiant woman" to the end, bravely doing her part, and offering her Son to GOD.

This was Mary's sacrifice—but what is her part in the Sacrifice that her Son is offering to His Father for the world's redemption? Just this, that she provided the Victim. She did not withhold her Son—her only Son. (Gen. xxii. 16.) JESUS on Calvary offered Himself to the Father; and Mary assisted—not only by the perfect union of her will and intention with His, but *actually*, by providing Him with the Body which He was offering to His Father. Her position was that of the Deacon at High

Mass. His part is not the offering of the Sacrifice—the Priest alone can do that—but he provides the Priest with the bread and wine which he is going to use for the Sacrifice, and without which there could be no Sacrifice. "A *Body* hast thou prepared Me"; and that Body came from Mary—it was with Blood drawn from her veins that He redeemed the world. But the Sacrificial Act was His, and His alone: "I have trodden the wine-press alone." (Isaias lxiii. 3.)

Point III.—Mary's Legacy

As she stood there taking her part, how her heart was enlarging! He was dying for the whole world—for the whole human race, past, present, and future—and she was His Mother; she was standing by and assisting; all His interests were hers. She had seen the conversions worked by Him on the Way of the Cross; she had seen the change in the dying thief; now Jesus addressed Himself to her, and by His Third Word from the Cross made her the Second Eve, the Mother of all living—of all for whom He was dying. "Woman, behold thy son!" Again He used the official title—*Woman*; He was not treating her now as *His* Mother, but rather as the Mother of all. Behold thy son; take John for thy son, and with him take the whole human race. He counted on her power of suffering, and it was through that suffering that she became the universal Mother. He knew how the sword would stab when she heard that she was to take John in His place, but He knew also that the wound made by that sword-thrust would enlarge her heart to take in her new family. He was dying, and His legacy to His Mother was the whole human race. The idea was not a new one to her, for He had been gradually training her up to it, as we have seen, ever since the Incarnation. He added another word to make all sure. He spoke now to John as the representative of the human race: "Behold thy Mother!" The immediate meaning of His words John

very well understood—that he was to cherish, support, and take care of her; be a son to her now that her own Son was being taken from her. But He had an intention in that word for each one of us. To each and all He said: "*Behold Thy Mother!*" and from that moment all who will, have the right to take her to their own.

To what extent have I taken this word seriously? Have I really believed that JESUS had me in His mind as well as St John when He said: "Behold thy Mother!" that it was of me that He thought and to me that He spoke? Have I felt the responsibility as well as the honour of being a child of Mary, and that it is my bounden duty to love and cherish her, to support and take care of her—that is, to stand up for her and shield her from those who *will* not behold her as their Mother? O my Mother, I want more than ever to take thee to *my own*, as thy first adopted son did. Come home with me, live side by side with me, talk to me of JESUS, and thus help to pass the time when you see me getting weary; help me to imitate Him as thou didst, and to share His work by my prayer and sacrifice as thou didst. And then, Mother, thou wilt always be there to show me what sacrifice really means—how it enters into all the little details of everyday life—to show me what having my will united to thy Son's means. Thou wilt be there to put a restraining hand upon me and make me live as a child of Mary should; thou, to whom JESUS was subject, wilt teach me what real submission means. Yes, I am decided that to-day it shall be recorded of me in Heaven: "From that hour that disciple took her to his own."

Colloquy with Mary.

Resolution. To take Mary as the special gift of JESUS to me.

Spiritual Bouquet. "There stood by the Cross of JESUS His Mother."

The Sixth and Seventh Dolours

"*And Joseph, buying fine linen and taking Him down, wrapped Him in the fine linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewed out of a rock.*" (St Mark xv. 46.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture of the Thirteenth Station.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to be unselfish in my grief.

Point I.—Mater Dolorosa

As Mary stands at her post, praying for her new family for whom her Son is dying, and uniting herself more closely than ever with His intentions, the sword never ceases to pierce afresh her wounded heart. She has to listen to the cry: "I thirst!" from the parched lips and throat of Him from Whom she had never heard a complaint; and she has to appear to be deaf to His needs. Again she hears a cry, more full of agony even than the last: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" and she who once lost her Son for three days (the *Third Dolour*) can understand in some small degree the anguish of that cry. Then after His next words: "All is consummated," she hears Him commend His Soul to His Father, and she watches Him die. She is alone! And not only is she alone, but she has a sense of responsibility. Just as on the occasion of a death among us, the one next has to rise to the responsibility and act *at once*, so it was with Mary. She was the one *next*. She knew that it was to her that the Apostles and all His friends would turn to know what to do—what He would like done. He who had died on the Cross "was indeed the Son of God," and she was His Mother; she, if anyone did, must know all about Him. So, although all is over, there is no time for Mary to relax and give way to her grief. There is work to be done—work that He has left her. "It is finished" for Him, but she is only just beginning her work as Mother of the

Church. And so she still stands at the Foot of the Cross, reverently worshipping the dead Body to which the Divinity is still united.

Her meditation was suddenly interrupted—"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His Side"; and again Simeon's prophecy was fulfilled: "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce." Soon followed what is called her *Sixth Dolour*—the taking down of her Son from the Cross. He was in the hands of friends now, and all was done with the greatest reverence and loving tenderness. But nothing could stay the sword from piercing Mary's heart when she received into her hands the blood-stained Crown of Thorns and the rough nails. Nothing could stay it when she had her JESUS once more in her arms, and was able to see for herself the cruel wounds as she washed them and bound them up. Then when the precious Body had been wrapped in the winding sheet, she accompanied the little cortège which carried It to the tomb. And when, after a few minutes' adoration, she beckoned them all away, and the great stone was rolled to its place, the sword pierced her heart again—it was the *Seventh Dolour*—the burial of JESUS.

She allowed John to escort her past the three crosses, along the way which He had trodden, back to the Cenacle. "That disciple took her to his own." The next time we make the Way of the Cross, let us make it with Mary as John did. She will explain to us better than anyone else can, the meaning of each "station."

Mary has left Him now, but she is with Him still in spirit and in heart—hence her strength. What a lesson she gives us on how to act in times of bereavement! We are never to lose sight of the fact that this particular kind of suffering is intended for our sanctification. This will prevent us from allowing it to make us morbid, selfish, gloomy, inconsiderate, ungrateful, acting as though *our* suffering were greater than that of everybody else, being

exacting and fastidious about things that remind us of our lost one—even of having the name mentioned in our presence! What about our sacrifice? Are not all such things as these a part of it? We have no business to add to the trials of others by our tyrannical selfishness. Sorrow ought to brace the soul up to greater heights of sanctity; if it depresses it to a lower level of spirituality, there is something very wrong with us. We are not copying Mary, neither are we uniting our sufferings to those of JESUS—the only way of making them meritorious. Let us see to it that our grief is a source of joy and blessing to everyone else in the house. This means self put on one side; it means a smiling face, a bright, cheery, voice in spite of a breaking heart. It means a great sympathy with the grief of others—and it *often* means that we shall get the credit of not really caring, of not having much depth of affection, not much heart! But this again is part of the sacrifice which we gladly offer if only it may aid suffering in doing its blessed work. There were those, no doubt, who were ready enough to say that Mary's calm courage was unnatural. But *we* know that it was supernatural: let us try to copy her in it.

Point II.—MATER MISERICORDIÆ

What must have been the grief of the Apostles—their Friend, Teacher, and Lord dead, their hopes all dashed, and their consciences ill at ease as they thought of their base desertion of Him in His hour of need! They were scattered everyone to his own, but probably one by one they found their way back to the Cenacle. It was the last house where they had been all together with Him, and it seemed natural to go there again—and besides, His Mother was there. She was next to Him, and therefore more to them than anyone else could be. *She* had been faithful to the end. She could tell them more about Him than anyone

else could. Her very voice and manner reminded them of Him. Somehow, they felt that she would look at things from His point of view, and that if *she* forgave them for the wrong they had done to her Son, *He* would. Then they would learn from John what JESUS had said about her with His dying lips—that they might now regard her in very deed as their Mother; that she was now in fact the Mother of the Church which he had founded; and that they could turn to her in their times of perplexity and difficulty. "Behold thy Mother"—the Mother of Good Counsel and the Mother of Mercy! Was it not just what they wanted? How well He knew! How thoughtful it was of Him to leave us Mary!

And so we may think of Mary on Holy Saturday rallying her new family round her, loving them for her Son's sake, making excuses for their weaknesses, as a mother ever does, and putting fresh heart and courage into them. And then we may think of her stealing away to ponder —to make the first Meditation on the Passion, presenting willingly her heart to the sword once more, that her compassion might fit her for her position as Mother of Mercy.

Colloquy with Mary, who says to me: For you, too, my child, "I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. He that hearkeneth unto me shall not be confounded; and they that work by me shall not sin." (Ecclus. xxiv. 24–30.)

Resolution. To take my troubles and difficulties to Mary to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Mater Dolorosa, Mater misericordiæ, ora pro nobis."

The First Glorious Mystery

"*He shall reign for ever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.*" (St Luke i. 32, 33.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture or statue of Our Lady.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to learn from Mary how to rejoice.

Point I.—Mary's Easter Day

"Of His Kingdom there shall be no end." It was to Mary that these words were said, before her Son was born; and she believed them. She knew, therefore, that He would rise again; she knew that all was not finished when she left the precious Body in Joseph's new tomb. In all probability, too, Jesus had told her, as He told the Apostles, that He would rise again on the third day. And while they "believed not nor understood," *she* did both. But this supernatural gift of faith, which she exercised to the full, had not the power to prevent the sword from piercing on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. She felt the full weight of all her sorrow, but she sorrowed, as all Christian mourners should do, "not without hope."

What must her expectation have been as she knelt on that Holy Saturday night counting the minutes till the day dawned! She knew that He would rise again—but would she see Him? Would He come to her? He had kept her so much in the background during His ministry, perhaps He will do so still, and it will be to those who need Him most that He will come. No, sweet Mother, the meek and lowly of heart ever attract Him; it is to the heart which *desires* Him most that He will come. A pure, disinterested desire to have Jesus ever proves to Him an invincible attraction. No one on earth desired to see Jesus as Mary did, and it was to her, as the traditions of the Holy Fathers testify, that He came first—as soon as the Easter Day dawned and "death could no longer be holden of Him." The Evangelists are silent about this

appearance of JESUS to His Blessed Mother, for the very good reason that she told them nothing about it. There was no need to do so, as, for example, there was to tell various little details about His Birth, because GOD wished us to know them. At this meeting of the Son and the Mother even Angels would fear to intrude; and we ordinary mortals simply should not understand what took place, even were it narrated to us. All those to whom He appeared would take it for granted that His Mother had seen Him—why write down a thing that everybody knew? "According to thy faith be it unto thee." Mary was the *only* one who had faith enough to believe that her Son would rise again, and it was only natural that she should be the first to see Him. She was the one who had entered most deeply into His sorrows, and she would be the one to whom He would first communicate the Easter joy. Let us now think a little about Mary's joy.

Point II.—MARY'S JOY AND ITS CAUSES

What joy it must have been to Mary to see that precious Body which He had taken from her, which she had nurtured and tended and loved, which she had seen so recently covered with scars and gaping wounds! What joy it must have been to her to see It in all the beauty of Its Resurrection—to see It glorified! Her joy was so intense that the saints tell us it was only by a miracle that her body could master her soul and keep it still a prisoner. And then the consolation of knowing that never again would He suffer—the joy of seeing the Five Wounds and knowing that He would keep them always, as precious memorials of His death and of His victory over death, of His undying love for His Church, and of His right to give it all that it should ever claim, because with those wounds He had more than paid for all that it would ever need.

Mary entered into all these truths as no one else could, and therefore her Easter joy was greater than that of anybody

else. Her joy was greater, too, because her *love* was greater. Her love for JESUS was wholly unselfish, and so was her joy; it was wholly on account of the joy of her Son. She forgot her own joy for the moment; she forgot the long exile that lay before her; she forgot everything but His joy.

Her *suffering* also was indirectly another cause of her joy. Our capacity for joy is in proportion to our capacity for suffering. We have seen something of what Mary's capacity for suffering was, and so we can understand in some small measure how full was her cup of joy.

Mary had other joys too, which were incidental to the joy of seeing her Son risen and glorified. She saw the saints who rose with Him, for He would be sure to present them to His Mother. Some would need no introduction—her dear spouse St Joseph, her parents St Joachim and St Anne.

Yes, Mary's joys more than made up for her sorrows. One day, if we try to receive our cup of sorrow as Mary did, that is, take it *for* JESUS and *with* JESUS, we too shall receive the cup of joy, and we shall be able to say with St Paul as we put the two side by side: "The sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory." (Rom. viii. 18.)

Teach me, O holy Mother of God, something of this real joy —the joy that is arrived at through faith, through suffering, through a perfect union of heart with the Sacred Heart of JESUS, and through conformity to GOD'S will; the joy of the risen life—the new life that rises out of the death to self.

Colloquy. The *Regina Cœli* :—

"Queen of Heaven, rejoice,—Alleluia
For He Whom thou wast made worthy to bear—Alleluia
Hath risen as He said—Alleluia.
Pray for us to God—Alleluia."

(*Anthem from Easter to Trinity.*)

Resolution. To say my *Fiat* bravely with Mary, as the surest way of sharing her joy.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Causa nostræ lætitiæ, ora pro nobis."

The Second and Third Glorious Mysteries

"*All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of* JESUS, *and with His brethren.*" (Acts i. 14.)

1*st Prelude.* (1) A picture of the Ascension—Our Lady kissing the Footprints.

(2) A picture of the Descent of the Holy Ghost—a tongue of fire resting on the head of Our Lady, who is seated in the midst of the Apostles.

2*nd Prelude.* Grace to enter into the dispositions of Mary.

Point I.—MARY ON ASCENSION DAY

Many, no doubt, were the visits that JESUS paid to His Blessed Mother during the forty days that His glorified Body still lingered in this world of ours, as though He were loath to leave it. He was bracing her up for the time of exile that lay before her, filling her with stores of consolation upon which she would be able to draw in her times of desolation. She probably knew that the fortieth day was the last, and that, when He led His little flock out "as far as Bethania," it was His last walk with them. She knew of the "mountain appointed" where He wished all His brethren to assemble—"more than five hundred at once." (1 Cor. xv. 6.) She heard His last words, heard Him charge His *witnesses*: "Going, therefore, teach (*make disciples of*) all nations: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (St Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) She was not to be a witness—though she was ever the silent witness of His Humanity—but it was only fitting that she should hear all the orders that were given to her children. She heard of the promise of the Father, and that they were to stay in the city till it was fulfilled. She saw Him lift up His hands in blessing—the last blessing; she watched with the rest His glorified

Body raised up from their midst—watched till "a cloud received Him out of their sight," then she knelt in humble acquiescence to GOD'S will and kissed the ground where He had just stood—the favoured bit of earth which was the last to be touched by His blessed Feet. When she looked up, it was to see two angels asking the astonished disciples why they were gazing into Heaven, and telling them that the same JESUS who was taken up from them into Heaven would so come again as they had seen Him go. It was not to *her* that the angels were speaking—*she* was not gazing up. She *knew* the lesson that the others were being taught, knew that her Son was already in Heaven, sitting at the right hand of GOD. (St Mark xvi. 19.) When the Apostles realised sufficiently what had happened, they, "adoring, went back to Jerusalem with joy," (St Luke xxiv. 52), and Mary led them to the Cenacle to "wait for the promise of the Father," as her Son had bidden them.

Thus she taught them the lesson she would teach all her children—that the only thing to do in times of desolation and sorrow is to follow closely the commands of JESUS: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." It is no use to stand gazing after what has gone; this is no time for regrets; He gave a clear command: "Go to Jerusalem and wait." We shall always find that there is no balm for sorrow like fidelity to duty. It costs something; human nature longs to stay and hug its sorrow; but it is far wiser to turn away from the loved spot and go bravely hand in hand with the Mother of Sorrows to do the next thing to which duty—that is the voice of JESUS—calls us.

Point II.—MARY ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Nine days they spent with Mary the Mother of JESUS, persevering with one mind in prayer, (Acts i. 14), and

going constantly to the Temple to praise and bless GOD. (Luke xxiv. 53.) It was a Novena of prayer and thanksgiving. It was Mary's first official act as Mother of the Church. She kept the little flock together, kept them close to her Son by obedience to His last command, by intercession for the great gift that He had promised to send them, and by thanksgiving for all that He had been to them and done for them. It was the first Retreat, and they made it with Mary, the Mother of GOD.

What must Mary's prayers have been during those nine days! She was now more united than ever to her Son; her eye of faith saw Him at the Right Hand of GOD in Heaven; she saw eye to eye with Him; she knew all His interests and intentions; she had still a Mother's right to command Him; she knew that nothing in their relationship was changed, and that He would not refuse her behests in Heaven any more than He had done on earth. And so, as her eyes swept the wide horizon which was now hers, the Mother of the Church made a Novena for Pentecost, praying with all her knowledge and all her power, for the Holy Ghost to come down upon her children—to come and fill that Church of which she was the Mother, that Church which her Son had founded, for which He had given His life.

These first Retreatants had no books. They needed none—their lives were so closely bound up with the life of JESUS; the Holy Spirit prayed within them; and Mary was ever with them directing, and setting them an example. In proportion as these things are true of us are we independent of *exterior* help in our prayers. And the more we are able to dispense with exterior help, the more interior and real will be our prayers.

Then "when the days were accomplished"—when the Novena was over—the Holy Ghost came down as JESUS had promised that He should—came down as a tongue of fire upon each one: a proof that He had entered

into each one of those expectant, faithful souls, filling each according to his capacity, and giving each the power needful to carry on the work that was appointed for him to do.

What, then, must have been the measure with which Mary was "filled with the Holy Ghost," for what was the Apostles' work compared with hers? She had always been "full of grace"—she had long been the spouse of the Holy Ghost, ever since He had overshadowed her at the Incarnation, and He had always been filling her according to her ever-increasing capacity. We have seen how, under her Son's training, her horizon was ever enlarging—how much wider it became on Calvary, how pain and joy had dilated her heart, how her intercourse with her Divine Son during those forty days had still more widened her outlook; and now, with all the fresh territory over which she was to reign, in her mind and in her heart, she had been praying—the Holy Ghost had been praying within her—for Him to come and overshadow her once again, and fill her with grace that she might be able to meet all her new responsibilities as Mother of the Church. Mary had more need of the Holy Ghost than any of the hundred and twenty souls gathered in the Cenacle; her desire to receive Him too was greater than theirs; and so we may well believe that she received Him in a fuller measure. She had no need of the gifts of tongues and miracles, which were a necessity to the Apostles, to help them in the beginning of their difficult work. Her work during the remaining years of her life was that of intercession, and it was to be carried on in secret and obscurity. The gifts she needed from the Holy Ghost were those of hiddenness, patience, humility, conformity to GOD'S will. She needed Him in all His plenitude to pray within her with "unutterable groanings" for all the needs of the Church throughout all time. Her work was still, as it ever had been, to *ponder* in her heart—to meditate and hold

colloquies with her Divine Son, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, about all the interests which they had in common.

Colloquy. "Our Lady of Light, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, I offer thee my whole heart, my soul and my body, to keep for JESUS, that I may be His for ever. Our Lady of Light, pray for me." (*Prayer of Blessed Grignon de Montfort.*)

Resolution. To think more of the Holy Spirit praying within me.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Sacrarium Spiritus Sancti, ora pro nobis." (Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, pray for us.)

Mary's Exile

"*Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged.*" (Ps. cxix. 5.)

1*st Prelude.* A statue or picture of Our Lady.
2*nd Prelude.* Grace to learn how an exiled child of Eve should live.

Point I.—MARY'S EXILE

Tradition tells us that St John took the Holy Mother to his house in Jerusalem, and that it was there that she died, though she spent some of the time of her exile at Ephesus. In solitude and silence she pondered over all the wonderful mysteries of her life; she interceded for her new-born child, the Church, which had already so many needs; and she helped the Apostles by her prayers. They were soon scattered in different directions, "making disciples of all nations," as their Master had bidden them; and it would only be at rare intervals that they could come and see their Mother, and talk over their difficulties, and get the advice of her who saw eye to eye with her Son. But what a comfort and strength it must have been to

them to know that she was always there, telling her Divine Son of their needs!

And during those long years—according to some opinions fifteen, to others, twenty-three—what was Mary's strength? The same as it had ever been—union with her Son. Every day, tradition tells us, she received Him in the Blessed Sacrament at the hands of St John. What Communions must those have been, when Mary said again: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum,* and her GOD was again incarnate within her! What made those Communions so intense? The fact that His love and desire in coming were *reciprocated.* The love and desire are never wanting on His side, but unfortunately there is so little of either on ours! It takes more than one to make a good Communion. *A joining together* of two is the meaning of the word. If the union is to be strong, fervent, real, lasting, each must do his part. Oh, teach me, dear Mother, how to receive thy Son in Holy Communion. Thy whole life was centred in Him; thy every thought was with Him; everything thou didst was done for Him; every moment of thy exile gladly borne for Him; every sigh a spiritual Communion; and when each day the glad moment of actual Communion came, it was just His embrace—He pressed thee to His Heart for a few minutes, telling thee it would not be long before thy exile would be over, and thou wouldst see His Face again. Thy Communions were an ecstasy of love—help me to put a little more love into mine; teach me to regard them as the Bread from Heaven sent specially for the exile; teach me to make them the centre of my life; teach me to live my whole life with Him, so that my Communion may never be interrupted. This should be the aim, surely, of every communicant; it is the ideal life; it is the life that JESUS intended when He said: "He that eateth Me, he shall live by Me." It is possible; but oh, how far I come short!

Point II.—The Reason for Mary's Exile

Why did her Son leave her behind to suffer so intensely, as He well knew she would, from the separation? Would not the Beatific Vision in Heaven have been better than her Communions on earth? Could not her intercession for the Church have been even more effectual had she been close to her Son's throne in Heaven? Could she not have been the Mother of Good Counsel in Heaven for those who had to guide the Church in its infancy, as she has been ever since?

We can think of many reasons why Jesus left her in exile for a time:—

1. She had to *nurse the new-born Church* by strengthening and encouraging the Apostles with her example, so like that of the Master Himself, and by supplying the Evangelists with many details of His life, which they could not have learnt from any lips but hers.

2. She had to *establish her position* as Mother of the Church—the tradition was to be handed down by the Apostles that it was *she* who guided, and tended, and cared for the Church during the early and tender years of its existence; that it was to her they turned in times of perplexity and doubt; that her constant intercession for them was their strength. This could not have been so had she left the earth with her Son. During those long years of exile the new child learnt to regard Mary as its Mother, and when she was taken away into Heaven, it was quite natural to it still thus to regard her, and to teach all who came after to do the same.

3. Our Lord would give her still more time to *increase her merits* by suffering. He wanted her crown to be the most beautiful possible, and even for the Mother of God there was only one way to make it so—the way of suffering, which intensified her love and humility and submission to God's will.

4. May not another reason have been in order that she might be the *better able to sympathise* with the exiled children of Eve (*exules filii Evæ*)? Had He taken her with Him, they would surely have felt that their Mother could not quite understand their position. And what is such an effectual barrier to sympathy as the feeling that we are not understood?

So Mary was left in exile to gain much that she could not have gained otherwise.

I am one of the exiled children of Eve. What have *I* got to do as an exile?

1. *I have to establish my position.* There is a certain place prepared for me in Heaven, which *may* be mine through all eternity. What is to decide whether I get it or not? The way I "pass the time of my sojourning" here. By the time my exile is over, I must so have lived that there must be no doubt about it that I belong to the Heavenly land; that I am a child of GOD and an heir to His Kingdom; that I seek not the things of earth but those which are above; that Heaven is my Home. And what will be my position there? Mary earned her position as Queen of Angels, of Patriarchs, Prophets, Martyrs, Virgins, as Mother of the Church. What position shall I earn? That depends, as Mary's did, on my fidelity to grace. I shall have just that degree of glory and merit to which I have attained when I am called hence to give an account of my stewardship—no less and no more. The position I have to establish, then, during my exile, is that of being known by all the inhabitants of Heaven—all the Angels and Saints—as one who is sure to join them one day. "Make your calling and election *sure*."

2. *I have to suffer.* One of the actual reasons for my being here on earth is that I may *suffer*—not that suffering is in itself good, but it gives me the means—perhaps the greatest means—of developing the virtues which must be mine if I am to enter the Kingdom one day. Our Lord

chose for Himself and for His Mother a life of suffering, to make us understand and to show us how suffering may aid us—yes, the very same suffering which hardens the sinner. What is the secret, then, of suffering? That by means of it, and because of it, we may make Acts of Love and Contrition and Submission to GOD'S Will. Suffering is too powerful an instrument to leave our human nature untouched by it; we *must* do something under it—either *curse* GOD and die, as Job's wife advised him to do, or *bless* Him all the more fervently, as Job did. Let me remember, then, that one of the things I have to do as an exile is to see to it that GOD gets, out of each piece of suffering that He sends me, the extra *love* that He expected would result from it.

3. *To do the work GOD wants me to do*; to work in my little corner of His vineyard; to co-operate with Him in His great work of the salvation of souls; and to show sympathy and kindness to my fellow-exiles.

Colloquy. The Salve Regina:—"Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy; hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning, and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed Fruit of thy womb, JESUS: O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary." (*Anthem from Trinity to Advent.*)

Resolution. To learn the exile's lessons.

Spiritual Bouquet. "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Heb. xiii. 14.)

Mary's Death

"*They that work by me shall not sin.*" (From the Epistle for the Vigil of the Assumption, Ecclus. xxiv. 30.)

1*st Prelude.* A picture of Mary's death.
2*nd Prelude.* To prepare for death by living "by Mary."

Point I.—"THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN" (1 Cor. xv. 56)

Sin had never touched Mary; there was therefore for her no sting in death. She had no penalty to pay, neither had she to die for others as her Son died. Why, then, should Mary die?

1. Because she had a mortal nature. She belonged to the great human race, and it was therefore appointed unto her to die. (Heb. ix. 27.)

2. Because she chose to die (the Fathers say her Son gave her the choice) that she might be conformable in all things to her Son, and also that she might be the better able to help, and pray for, and sympathise with her children, who throughout all time would be constantly saying: "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

3. Because Our Lord wanted her to have a specially chosen death—one that came neither from old age nor sickness, but simply from *love*. Her love for Him was so great that her body could no longer hold her soul captive.

4. Because GOD would not deprive her of the inestimable privilege of making the sacrifice of her life to Him, and such a life! This practice it is which makes the death of His Saints precious in the sight of the Lord. (Ps. cxv. 15.)

Let us learn two lessons:—

1. To *choose* to be in all things conformable to JESUS, even though this choice means death to self.

2. How precious a thing in GOD'S sight is the sacrifice of their lives to Him by His children! Let us resolve to make Him this sacrifice often beforehand—at least every night before we take from His Hands the precious gift of sleep which "He giveth His beloved."

Point II.—MARY'S PREPARATION FOR DEATH

We are told that some little while before her death an Angel (probably Gabriel) was sent to tell her that her time was at hand. She answered: *Ecce ancilla Domini* ("Behold the handmaid of the Lord"), and made once again the sacrifice of her life. She then told the news to John, who made it known to the faithful. How great their sorrow must have been at the prospect of losing such a Mother! Legend tells us that Our Lord brought all the Apostles and missionaries, who were scattered all over the world, to witness her death. She blessed them, and encouraged them to continue their work, saying that she would help them powerfully in Heaven. Her joy was full because the time, which was to unite her to her Son, had come at last; but Mary was not selfish in her joy any more than she had been in her grief. She did not forget the sorrow of her children; they were still to be exiles, but exiles with a Mother in the Homeland—a Mother who would be there to befriend them and take an interest in all they were doing.

Do I realise this—that while I am an exile here I have a Mother in Heaven who is taking the keenest interest in all that concerns me, in all that is preparing me for my Home; a Mother who is waiting there for me, ready to welcome me?

Point III.—HOW MARY DIED

There was no sickness, no wearing out nor decay of that beautiful body, no effects in it of original sin. Of what, then, did Mary die? Of two things—*love* and *desire*;

and these were so intense that even *her* body, strong and perfect though it was, had not the power to detain the soul captive any longer. Mary died of love, as her Son had died of grief—a grief which was the outcome of an immense love. Did Mary receive the Last Sacraments? The Sacrament of Penance was out of the question for her sinless soul; we may doubt about Extreme Unction; but with what intensity of love and desire must she have received her Viaticum! And when JESUS came with all His court to fetch her immaculate soul, we are told that she said: "Thy will be done; for a long time I have sighed after Thee, my Son and my GOD; nothing can be more delightful than to join Thee and be where Thou art for ever."

Then the Angels began to sing—all who were present heard them—and while they sang, Mary said her *Fiat* and died, and her most pure soul began its eternal happiness in the sight of the Beatific Vision. The Eternal Trinity gave it the glory which was its due—the reward of her love so pure, so generous, so constant. She had a higher degree of glory and a clearer vision of GOD than all the Saints, because glory depends on grace, virtue, and merit, of which she had far more than any of them.

What does Mary's death say to me? "They that work by me shall not sin." You cannot be sinless, as I was, you cannot die of love, as I did, (St Theresa and St Philip of Neri did), but you can, by keeping close to me, and doing all your work at my side, keep from all wilful sin, and you can thus love JESUS so much that when He comes to fetch you, death will have no terrors for you, and you, too, will be able to say: *Ecce ancilla Domini*, Here I am, Thy servant, doing Thy work. "Blessed is that servant whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching"; and the best way to watch is to work at Mary's side.

And let me never forget that my degree of glory in Heaven will be according to the amount of grace and merit that I have at the moment of my death. How

thankful I should be that I still have power to increase these! And how eager and zealous to use my time to the best advantage! Death cometh when no man can work—when no more merit, no more reparation will be possible. The point I have then reached will be mine through all eternity. "As the tree falls, so will it lie." Holy Mary, Mother of GOD, pray for me now and at the hour of my death.

Colloquy with Mary, my Mother in Heaven, who is pleading for me; who is letting me do all my work close to her side; and who will be there at the hour of my death, to put me back into the Hands of her Son, Who gave me to her when He was on the Cross, saying: "Take this child and nurse it for Me." And He will see to it that none shall pluck me out of His Hands, for it is impossible for a child of Mary to be lost.

Resolution. To let love for her Son keep me close to Mary's side to-day, listening to all her directions about my work, so that I may do it to please Him.

Spiritual Bouquet. "They that work by me shall not sin."

Mary's Tomb

"*I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm; I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh.*" (Ecclus. xxiv. 20.)

"*In the Holy City likewise I rested, and my* abode *is in the full assembly of the Saints.*" (verses 15, 16.)

1*st Prelude.* The Apostles carrying the body of their Mother to the grave.

2*nd Prelude.* The grace of faith and love to penetrate into these mysteries.

Point I.—MARY'S BODY

The Angels still continued singing, while the Apostles and missionaries and women wept around the body. But

the heavenly music was catching, and it was not long before the mourners dried their tears and joined in the Angels' hymn of praise. We are told that the sick and the blind and the lame were allowed to come and kiss the precious body, and that in so doing they were instantly healed. Why was Mary's body so precious? Because it had been the tabernacle of the Son of GOD. Why is mine so precious? Because it, too, is so often the tabernacle of JESUS Christ. Do I realise that this makes my body holy? And do I regard it as something precious, consecrated and dedicated, GOD's Temple, His own dwelling-place? Often have Angels adored before it! How much respect, then, ought I to show it! How careful I ought to be as to what I do with it, and to what use I put it!

We are told that when the Apostles carried the bier to the grave, near the Garden of Gethsemani, all the faithful accompanied them, and the Angels never ceased their singing. The precious body exhaled a sweet fragrance which perfumed every place the procession had to pass through, and there were miracles and conversions all along the route. They laid their precious burden in the grave, put a great stone over it, and then dispersed. But they did not leave the grave alone. The Apostles watched and prayed there in turn, listening to, and rejoicing in the Angels' song.

Point II.—THE EMPTY TOMB

On the third day, St Thomas arrived from the Indies (the Apostles felt sure that it was Our Lord's plan that he should be late), and naturally wanted to look once again on his Mother's face. So they removed the stone, but only to find an empty tomb. They found the linen and clothes all in order, and they noted the delicious fragrance, but the body was gone; the soul had come back for it and fetched it to share in its glory. Then the Apostles remembered that during the morning the celestial

singing had suddenly stopped, and they knew that their Mother, clothed in her glorified body, was even then sitting at the Right Hand of her Son in Heaven. Why was it? Why was her body not left in the tomb? Because it was impossible for that body, from which the Word had taken Flesh, and which had never been touched by sin, to "see corruption." Also, although Mary had to die, and to bear the separation of soul and body, there was no necessity in her case for that penalty to be prolonged. GOD would not keep her—a perfect human creature—in an imperfect state, which the soul without the body must ever be. So, though not yet a dogma, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has ever been a belief of the Church. If we need a *proof*, let us call to mind the fact that no one has ever pretended to possess relics of Our Lady's body. Our Lord would surely never have deprived the Church of such treasures, had they existed.

Point III.—THE FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY

Let me turn from the empty tomb, and try to realise the other side of the picture—Mary in Heaven. This Fourth Glorious Mystery was foretold more than once in Holy Scripture: "Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting-place; Thou, and the Ark which Thou hast sanctified." (Ps. cxxxi. 8.) What is this ark sanctified by GOD but Mary's body, of which the Son of GOD took flesh?

"The Queen stood on Thy Right Hand in gilded clothing surrounded with variety." Who is this but the Queen of Heaven clothed with her glorious body of immortality?

"A Throne was set for the King's Mother, and she sat on His Right Hand," (3 Kings ii. 19), in all the dazzling beauty of her glorified body, surrounded by adoring Saints and Angels. Her Son on His Throne is saying to her: Ask, My Mother, for I will not say thee nay. The beauty of the scene is so entrancing, the light is so dazzling, the music is so enchanting, the mystery is so wonderful, that

I feel almost bewildered and want to shut my eyes and think what it all means. It means this—that I have a Mother in Heaven, and that when her Son bends towards her from His Throne, and when all the hosts of Heaven hold their breath to catch what their Queen is saying, they hear her ask some little favour for me, her child on earth. Why? Because I am saying: "Holy Mary, Mother of GOD, pray for me now." Let me, with the eye of faith and love, penetrate the thin veil, which hides these wondrous mysteries from my sight. Let me try to see things as they really are, and then my prayers will be less formal.

Colloquy with Mary on the Right Hand of JESUS in Heaven.

Resolution. To think of her there when I say my Rosary to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Holy Mary, Mother of GOD, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

"Who is She?"

(The Fourth Glorious Mystery)

"*Quæ est ista quæ progreditur quasi aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata?*" "*Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?*" (Cant. vi. 9.)

1st Prelude. The Angels asking three times: "Who is she?" (Cant. iii. 6; vi. 9; viii. 5.)

2nd Prelude. Grace to understand who she is.

Point I.—"WHO IS SHE?"

"Who is she?" ask the Angels, as they see Mary coming into Heaven. Once before had One clothed in the robe of His beautiful, glorified Body passed through Heaven's portals; and the Angels had said: "Who is this that cometh

with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful One in His robe?" (Isaias lxiii. 1), and they had opened wide Heaven's gate to let in the Conqueror of sin and death, the King of glory, the Lord mighty in battle. But who is *she*—a woman, who, though she is beautiful as the morning rising, fair as the moon, and bright as the sun, is also terrible as an army set in array? She also has come from the battlefield; she also is a conqueror, for she has crushed the serpent's head; she has undone Eve's terrible work, and, as far as a creature can, has made reparation for it. She it is who has stood like a rock amidst the most crushing sorrows. Her strength is terrible to the devil, but the Angels rejoice in it, and her children flee to her as the *Refugium peccatorum*, saying: *Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.* (Give me, too, strength against thy enemies.) And so the Angels open wide Heaven's gates again, to let in the Mother of the King—the Queen of Heaven—*their* Queen—who has earned her right to her throne; not by being the Mother of GOD, but by nobly fighting the battle against sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"Maria Mater gratiæ,
Dulcis Parens clementiæ,
Tu nos ab hoste protege,
Et mortis hora suscipe."

(O Mary, Mother of grace, sweet fount of gentleness, do thou protect us from the enemy, and receive us in the hour of our death.)

And she *will*; she is there for her children. "Who is she?" She is our Mother; she will never forget it, though she is the Queen of Heaven, of Angels, and of Saints; and she will ever be terrible to all who dare to attack her children.

Point II.—"WHO IS SHE?"

"Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense, and

of all the powders of the perfumer?" (Cant. iii. 6.) That is: Who is she who is adorned with all possible graces and virtues? "Who is she?" She is the "fairest among women" (ch. i. 7) because of her *humility*, answers the Angel who heard her say: *Ecce ancilla Domini*, at the most exalted moment of her life. "Who is she?" She is the "fairest among women" because of her conformity to GOD'S will, say those who have heard over and over again her *Fiat* when the sword was piercing her soul. "Who is she?" We, too, can answer the question, for we know her. We have watched her, and meditated upon her life, from the moment of her Immaculate Conception till her holy death of love and desire; and we have seen that she has always been growing in grace and in conformity to her Divine Son. Yes, she is the "fairest among women," and she is my Mother and my model. How is it with me? Am I known to my friends, to those who live with me, to my Guardian Angel, yea, to the Blessed Trinity, as one, who is growing in virtue and grace; as one, whose conformity to JESUS and His will, is apparent from the use I make of the *Ecce ancilla* and the *Fiat*? There must be some resemblance between the child and the Mother.

Point III.—"WHO IS SHE?"

For the third time the Angels ask the question: "Who is she that cometh up from the desert flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?" (ch. viii. 5.) There is no doubt about it now—she is His Mother, and her Beloved is JESUS, the Son of GOD and of Mary. What unspeakable joy is hers to find herself once more in the arms of her Beloved! "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand shall embrace me," (ch. ii. 6), and she leans upon Him. She had never left Him really; she had been leaning on Him all the time of her exile: by her memory, by her love, by her Communions, by her constant doing

of His will. This is why I can so safely lean on Mary, the Mother of Good Counsel, because to lean on her is to lean on JESUS, on Whom she leans. She nurses her children *for Him.*

"Who is she that cometh up from the desert?" In spirit Mary had ever been coming up. Always had she sought "the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of GOD." Her treasure was in Heaven, and nothing on earth had power to attract or attach her.

How far do I copy my Mother in this? Are my affections set on things above, where JESUS and Mary are? Have things of earth no attraction for me in comparison with heavenly things? Am I ready to give them up to Him to Whom they belong when He asks for them? Is my whole heart in Heaven because my treasure is there? This is what is meant by going up from the desert. It means striving always after what is more perfect. It means that each day finds me *more* charitable, *more* faithful, *more* careful about occasions of sin, *more* like my Mother. And it means also *Sursum corda* (Lift up your hearts) whenever the difficulties and sorrows of the desert seem too much.

Colloquy with Mary.

Resolution. To ask myself the question often to-day: "Who is she?"

Spiritual Bouquet. "Pulchra es et decora filia Jerusalem, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata." (Thou art fair and comely, O Daughter of Jerusalem, terrible as an army set in array.)

Mary's Coronation

(The Fifth Glorious Mystery)

"*Thou wast made exceeding beautiful and wast advanced to be a Queen.*" (Ezech. xvi. 13.)

1*st Prelude.* The great sign which appeared in Heaven: "A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." (Apoc. xii. 1.)

2*nd Prelude.* The grace so to live and die, that I may one day be crowned.

Point I.—Mary's Coronation

Specie tua et pulchritudine tua, intende, prospere procede, et regna. (In thy comeliness and thy beauty go forth, proceed prosperously, and reign.) The culminating point is reached, and Mary is led in triumph to receive her crown from the Blessed Trinity. God the Father crowns her as a *Victor*; God the Son as a *Queen*; and God the Holy Ghost as a *Bride.* We give our crowns on earth to victors, to queens and to brides. Mary was all of these, for she had conquered the devil; she was the King's Mother, and she was the spouse of the Holy Ghost.

1. She was crowned as a *Victor,* as a sign of her courage and bravery. God the Father had seen the world, which He had created and had pronounced to be "very good," spoiled by sin. The Arch-fiend had entered Paradise, and had stolen away the hearts of His children, robbing them of His grace, and leaving them and all their descendants stained by sin. To Satan God had spoken of a woman whose Child would be his enemy; and of her He said: "She shall bruise thy head." Now the old prophecy has been fulfilled, and Mary stands before Him waiting for her crown. She

has crushed the serpent; she has been terrible to all GOD'S enemies; and the crown that the Eternal Father places on the head of His daughter is a token that she is indeed a Victor.

How did Mary win the Victor's crown? By her fidelity to grace. No one ever had so many occasions of grace, and she did not miss one of them.

"There *is*," somewhere in the heavenly courts, "a crown laid up for *me*." (2 Tim. iv. 8.) But "the Lord, the just Judge" will only give it me if "I have fought a good fight." (verse 7.) "To him that shall *overcome* will I give to sit with Me in My Throne." (Apoc. iii. 21). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (chap. ii. 10.) "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (chap. iii. 11). All, then, depends on my efforts. I have got to be *faithful*, to *fight*, to *overcome*, and to *hold fast*. My consolation is that my Mother is interceding for me; my enemies are the same as hers, and she has overcome them. *Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*

2. She is crowned as a *Queen*. Her Son is the King of Heaven, and He crowns her as the Queen-Mother. "A throne was set for the King's Mother, and she sat on His Right Hand." (3 Kings ii. 19.) "The Queen stood at Thy Right Hand in gilded clothing, clothed round about with varieties." (Ps. xliv. 14.)

Kings and Queens wear their crowns in token of their power and authority. JESUS crowned His Mother in token of *her* power and authority. He made her Queen of Angels, of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and gave her not only authority over all these, but also, in a certain sense, if we may say so reverently, over Himself. He allowed her still to keep the sweet authority which she had exercised over Him at Nazareth, when He was "subject" to her; for He says to her: "My Mother, ask, for I *must* not turn away thy face."

(3 Kings ii. 20.) How He loves us—even to the extent of pledging Himself to answer the intercessory prayer of one who He knows will make full use of her privilege—one who is even now turning to me, her child, and saying: "I will speak for thee to the King." (verse 18). Let me determine to have my share in this blessed compact between the Son and the Mother, by continually asking my Queen-Mother for her intercession. *Sancta Dei Genitrix, ora pro nobis.*

3. The Holy Ghost crowns her as His *Spouse.* "Come from Libanus, my spouse; come and thou shalt be crowned." (Cant. iv. 8.) "Faithful unto death" she had been; ever since her Immaculate Conception she had always listened to the least inspiration of grace which her Divine Spouse had suggested, and now she receives her reward, the "crown of life." The end is attained, and there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God.

Point II.—The Joy of the Angels

De cujus Assumptione gaudent Angeli et collaudant Filium Dei. At whose Assumption the Angels rejoice and praise together the Son of God. (*Introit for the Feast of the Assumption.*)

What were the causes of their joy?

1. Mary's joy at her re-union with her Son.

2. Her reception and coronation as their Queen.

3. Her being placed on the throne at her Son's Right Hand.

4. The sight of her beautiful glorified body—the means of the Incarnation—before which, as before the Tabernacle, they had so often worshipped their hidden God.

5. The likeness between the Mother and the Son—a likeness which had been increasing during her years of exile, by means of the Blessed Sacrament.

6. Hearing Jesus call her *Mother.* "My Mother, ask."

7. Seeing the great Intercessor at her work praying for sinners, in whom they take such an interest.

And the result of their joy is that "they praise together the Son of GOD"—that is, they perfectly fulfil the end for which they were created, teaching us the great lesson that the more we know Mary and rejoice in her joy, her position and her work, the more we shall know and praise her Divine Son, and so fulfil the end for which we were created.

But it is not only the Angels who are rejoicing. She is "*Queen of all Saints*" as well as "*Queen of Angels*," and the Church Triumphant is swelling the chorus of joy. Each member of that spotless multitude has already been a cause of joy in Heaven, for there is joy in the presence of the Angels of GOD over every sinner that doeth penance. (St Luke xv. 7.) "Joy cometh in the morning" after the night of doing penance. "No cross, no crown." It is because Mary is the "*Mother of Sorrows*" that she is able to be the "*Cause of our joy*," and we must all pass by the same route.

Help me, my Mother, to share the joy of the Angels and Saints even in the "valley of tears." It is possible, but it can only be done by a faith strong enough to see things as they really are.

And what about Mary's joy? As she stands in the midst of that great multitude of Angels and Saints, who are vying with each other to do her honour, her heart too is overflowing with joy, but it is all for her Son. The honour and worship that are being paid to her are *His*; they are because of "the great things *He* has done" for her. She is only His handmaid, and she is always singing her *Magnificat*: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit doth *rejoice* in GOD my Saviour." *Humility* is ever her greatest virtue, and she shows it on her Coronation Day by casting her crown at the Feet of Him Who redeemed her with His Blood—her Son, her Saviour, and her GOD.

Colloquy. The *Ave Regina Cœlorum*:—"Hail, Queen of Heaven! Hail, Lady of the Angels! Hail, blessed root and gate, from which came light upon the world! Rejoice, O glorious Virgin, that surpassest all in beauty! Hail, most lovely Queen! and pray to Christ for us." (*Anthem from Purification to Easter.*)

Resolution. To work for my crown to-day.

Spiritual Bouquet. "Ora pro nobis, Sancta Dei Genitrix, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi."

Salve Regina

(According to the Second Method of Prayer[1])

SALVE. This anthem of the Blessed Virgin, which the Church bids her children use from Trinity to Advent, begins with a *salutation.* In addressing our Mother, we are to copy the Archangel who, when he came with a message to the lowly child at Nazareth, begins by *saluting* her. Hail! full of grace. But though the word, which is here put into the lips of us sinners, means, "Be thou safe and well," it is not a wholly disinterested salutation; there

[1] *Note.*—There are times when we get a little tired of Preludes and Points, and feel that a change of method would be a help to our Meditation. St Ignatius knew this, and knew also that to some minds Preludes and Points would be a positive hindrance; and so he has given us, in his book of the *Spiritual Exercises*, "Three (other) methods of prayer." Our Meditation to-day is according to the *Second Method*, which "consists in considering the signification of each word of a prayer." (Text of the *Exercises.*) St Ignatius says that if one or two words give us sufficient matter for thought and spiritual relish and consolation, we are not to be anxious to pass on, even though the whole time of the Meditation be spent on *one* word, but leave the rest till the next day. So we may take to-day as many words of the *Salve Regina* as we find spiritual relish for. This method, St Ignatius tells us, may be applied to "*any other prayer whatsoever.*"

is an idea of wanting a favour implied in it, though we do not actually ask for it. It is like the cheerful "Good-morning, sir!" of the beggar. Our *Hail* here has not so much the majesty of the salutation of an Archangel as the cry of distress of a banished child.

REGINA. She is appealed to as a Queen; she asks as a Queen; she is answered as a Queen; she gives as a Queen. "I pray thee speak to the King, for he cannot deny thee anything. . . . I will speak for thee to the King. . . . And the King arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne. And a throne was set for the King's Mother, and she sat on his right hand. And she said to him: I desire one small petition of thee; do not put me to confusion. And the King said to her: My Mother, ask, for I must not turn away thy face." (3 Kings ii. 17–20.) Such is the beautiful picture Holy Scripture portrays for us of King Solomon and his mother Bethsabee. "But a greater than Solomon is here"; and we are addressing His Mother. With what confidence then may we say our *Salve Regina*! She has pledged herself to speak to the King for us, and her Royal Son will give her all that she asks. She is the Queen of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins—yes, Queen of *all* Saints. Why? Because when they were "poor banished children" on earth they recognised her as their Queen, and did not address their *Salve* to her in vain.

MATER. Not only is she Queen of Heaven and my Queen, but also she is the Mother of each one of the banished children. "I will not leave you orphans," JESUS said when He was leaving the sorrowing disciples; and a little later, when His last moment drew near, He showed them their Mother, saying to St John, who represented the whole human race: "Behold thy Mother!" and to her: "Behold thy son," and in him all thy banished children!

What a consolation it would be to me if I realised more that I have a Mother in Heaven! My first thought in any

trouble, difficulty, or perplexity would be: "Salve sancta Parens!"

MISERICORDIÆ. She is the Mother of so many virtues—of fair love, of knowledge, of good counsel, of holy hope, of divine grace—yes, and the Mother of Sorrows too; but here her children love to call her "Mother of *mercy*," of *pity*, for they are exiles, and it is she who can effect their ransom. *Mercy*—this is what they who say the *Salve Regina* need. They are poor, banished, weeping children, and they need the pity, the mercy, the sympathy of their Mother. How comes it that there is no sorrow with which the Heart of Mary cannot sympathise? How is it that "never is it heard of that her children turn to her in vain"? Because the "sword pierced her own heart also." No heart except that of her Divine Son can sympathise like the seven-times pierced heart of Mary. It is because she understands so well the sorrows of a bleeding heart, that not the smallest need of any one of her smallest children, who appeals to her, is overlooked. How merciful should they be who have such a merciful Mother! "Go thou and do in like manner," was our Blessed Lord's injunction when He had been telling of the mercy of the Good Samaritan. (St Luke x. 37.) Am I merciful in my judgments of others; merciful when I am talking of them; merciful to those who have wronged me; merciful to those who come to me for pardon; merciful in my thoughts? O Virgin most merciful, pray for me!

VITA. She is our *life*, for it was she who gave life to our Redeemer. It was from Mary's veins that He took the Blood which He shed for our salvation. She did not spare her Son, her only Son, (Gen. xxii. 16), but offered Him up for a sacrifice for us. In very truth she can say: "In me is all hope of life." (Ecclus. xxiv. 25.)

DULCEDO. Our sweetness. Think of her sweetness all through her life—when the Angel came to her; during the three months that she helped Elizabeth; when there

was no room for her in the inn at Bethlehem; when her Son seemed to take no notice of her during His ministerial work; when she met Him on the Way of Sorrows; when she stood by the Cross; when she gently bathed His wounds and prepared His Body for the grave; when she consoled the mourning disciples; when He appeared to her on Easter Day; when she kissed His footprints as He ascended to Heaven; when the Holy Ghost came down upon her. Even from her body after the soul had left it, and even from her grave after the body had left it, there came a delicious odour, reminding all who enjoyed it of the *sweetness* of the Mother who had left them. And this sweetness her children must try to copy. Is my sweetness for ever proclaiming itself to all with whom I come in contact—by my patience under the little trials of every-day life, by the kind word with which I meet the sharp, sarcastic one, by my extreme care of the feelings of others, by my universal kindness, by the humility with which I bear humiliations, by the ready way in which I prefer everybody else to myself? O my Mother, pray for thy child, and teach me how to copy thee!

Et Spes Nostra. How necessary is *hope* to the poor banished children! Without it they would indeed be in a desperate condition; but Mary is ever inspiring them with hope. *Ego Mater sanctæ spei.* (I am the Mother of holy hope.) And her hope is all for her children: she has no need of it for herself. She is a true Mother—always hopeful of her children, never giving them up.

It is impossible for a child of Mary not to share her Mother's holy hope. A child of Mary *cannot* despair! When we think about death and final perseverance, what holy hope at once fills our hearts as we remember that we have put that terrible moment into the hands of our Mother! *Ora pro nobis, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ.* (Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.) "Hail, our hope!" Before these words all fears disappear. For

never has it been known that those who appeal to the Mother of holy hope appeal in vain.

SALVE. We repeat our salutation. We do not want her to forget us.

The importunate are ever dear to the heart of Mary as they are to the Heart of her Divine Son. Let us constantly greet her with our *Salve*—it will be enough to appeal to her Mother-heart, and she will give us whatever we are needing.

AD TE. To *thee*. To whom should we go if not to the Mother whom JESUS has given us. "Behold thy Mother!" It is only natural that we should turn to thee. *Monstra te esse matrem.* Show thyself to be a mother by hearkening to our cry.

CLAMAMUS—*do we cry*. It is a direct cry for help now—we make no secret of it—the children are calling aloud for their Mother—their need is so great that they care not who hears them.

EXULES. At last we describe ourselves; one word is sufficient—*exules*. We are *exiles*; we are not at home; we are banished from our country. There is something so pathetic about an exile. How he cherishes any news of his dear country! How he writes every little detail of his life and of the strange land to his mother at home! How he longs for her letters!

Mary is my Mother, and I am an exile. Do I love to hear about my own country? Do I tell my Mother of all the difficulties of the way and allow her to console me with stories of the Homeland? "How shall we sing in a strange land?" It *is* possible, by keeping in touch with Mary. She will so inspire us with hope and with love for our heavenly country that we shall often find our hearts light enough to soar beyond this land of exile, and to join in the ceaseless praises of those who have reached home.

Queen of Heaven, give me a *real* desire for Heaven.

FILII EVÆ. We account for our exile by explaining

that we are children of *Eve*. We had another mother once, and she brought misery on all her children, and they were all with her "driven out from Paradise," and an angel with a flaming sword was put at the entrance to prevent their getting back. Poor children! Is there any use in crying for re-admittance? Yes, for before the justice of GOD drove out Eve and her children, He spoke of another Mother, who was, through her Divine Son, to undo all the harm that Eve had done, and to "open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." To whom, then, is it more natural for the poor banished children of Eve to turn than to the Mother whose one idea is to get them back?

And with our cries are joined those of other banished children whose cry: "How long!" is ever ascending to Heaven. It is their Mother Mary whom they long to see; for as the turn of each one's banishment expires, she it is who comes to open the gate and bring them to the "better country" which they have so long desired.

When we say our *Salve*, let us remember those souls who, though they are holy, are still banished children, and let us intercede with their Mother for them.

AD TE SUSPIRAMUS. To thee do we send up our sighs. The idea is that each breath is a sigh, and a sigh meant for our Mother to hear. Well would it be for us if this were true! It would change the character of our exile. A sigh meant for Our Blessed Lady could not be one of discontent and murmuring and rebellion against our lot. The very fact that it is intended for her would make it full of love and hope and submission to GOD'S will. It would be like the sigh of a child whose mother has promised it some little pleasure. The time seems very long to the little one, and as she sits patiently by her mother's side, a sigh escapes her now and then —a very marked and intentional sigh! What does it mean? IT means that though she will not speak or do anything that her mother might not like, yet she would

remind her mother of her presence and let her know that she is feeling the time very long. Does the mother mind the sighs? Oh no, for each one tells her of the love of her child, and makes her anxious to shorten the time of waiting if she can.

GEMENTES ET FLENTES. The sighs become more audible —*groaning* and *weeping*—the exiles are *mourning* the loss of things they can never have again till they get home. It is one of the times when they feel that the harps must be hung up, (Ps. cxxxvi.), when mirth and joy are altogether out of place. Such times will come in our land of exile; and these are the times when we shall do well to cry out to our Mother.

O Mary, look upon thy weeping children, and as the great wail of suffering humanity rises up to thee, "show thyself a Mother," the Mother of Consolation. Come to the suffering hearts that cry for thee, and make them understand that joy and gladness is for them, even in the land of their exile ever since the Sun of justice has risen over it "with healing in His wings." Whisper to each heartbroken one, words of hope and consolation; tell of reparation, of mortification, of detachment, of the immense value of suffering, till the sorrowing heart is willing, yea *glad*, to suffer.

IN HOC LACRYMARUM VALLE. In this *vale*. Our land of exile is a Valley of Humiliation. It was here that JESUS came to stay, when He *humbled* Himself even to the death of the Cross; and here it is that He would have each one of His children wait till the humiliations of the valley have taught them to conquer self-love. "Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of GOD, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation." (1 Pet. v. 6.)

It is a vale of *tears*—a vale where JESUS wept; a vale which has been sanctified by the tears of a Magdalen, and a Peter, and of multitudes of others who have learnt here to be saints; a vale where every tear shed by His children

is treasured by GOD. "Thou hast set my tears in Thy sight." (Ps. lv. 9.)

We read of two occasions on which JESUS wept—once for the sorrows of His friends (St John xi. 35), and once for the sins of His enemies. (St Luke xix. 41.) I need not then be ashamed of tears—not even if I have to say with the Psalmist: "My tears have been my bread day and night." (Ps. xli. 4.) But I must be careful that they resemble those of JESUS, that the cause of them is never self-love or self-pity, but sorrow for my own sins and those of others, and for anything which grieves the Heart of JESUS. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," for He Himself "will wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Ps. cxxv. 5, and Apoc. vii. 17.)

EIA ERGO ADVOCATA NOSTRA. *Therefore,* just because of our misery and need — it is our only plea, and one which appeals more than any other to a Mother's heart —we appeal to her as *our Advocate*: one who will plead our cause, who will speak to the King for us and tell Him of our needs, as she did long ago at Cana of Galilee. Had ever banished children such an advocate—one to whom the Judge has pledged Himself: "I must not turn away thy face!"

O *Advocata nostra,* plead for me with thy Son when I stand before Him to be judged! In that terrible moment remember my *Salve,* for I shall be unable to say it then.

MISERICORDES OCULOS AD NOS CONVERTE. *Turn thy merciful eyes upon us.* We only ask her to *look.* It is quite enough for a mother to see her child in trouble. She does not need to be told what to do.

ET JESUM BENEDICTUM FRUCTUM VENTRIS TUI NOBIS POST HOC EXILIUM OSTENDE. Here we get to the point of the prayer—the sighs, and groans, and cries, and tears of the banished children are all because they want to see JESUS. *And after this our exile show unto us the Blessed*

Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. "We would see Jesus" (St John xii. 21), and we come to ask His Mother to show Him to us. This is her great work; and she turns to the children and says: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye," and you shall see His Face one day.

After this our exile.

> "When the voyage is o'er, O stand on the shore
> And show Him at last to me."

It is because I cannot see Jesus that I am so often in trouble in the land of exile. If my faith were strong enough I should see Him continually, and sorrow would flee away. We have not got to wait till the voyage is o'er before seeing Him. Many and many a glimpse of the Blessed Fruit of her womb does our Mother give us. To be near her means that we are near Him too. Each Communion, each absolution—yea, each humiliation and sorrow is our Mother letting us see Jesus if we will only look; and when she stands on the shore to show Him *at last*, we shall see that it is the "same Jesus" Who so often walked with us in the land of our exile, though our eyes were for the most part holden by our want of faith, and we did not recognise Him.

O Clemens, O Pia, O Dulcis Virgo Maria. *O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.* We multiply our words in trying to express to our Mother something of what we feel towards her, but they all mean the same thing—that she is a *Mother*. Her sweetness is as ointment poured forth, and attracts all to it. Her kindness and love, too, have been known to all since she stood at the Foot of the Cross, and received all her banished children into her stricken heart. Never in vain can we appeal to our sweet Mother. And so with renewed confidence we will say our *Salve*, rejoicing even in this vale of tears because we have a Mother who knows all about us, and who will never forget us; whose one desire is to show us the Blessed Fruit

of her womb, JESUS; who will teach us to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, even as she sang her *Magnificat*; and who will one day, when the days of our exile are over, sing with us the ever "new song" of Redemption to "Him Who loved us and washed us in His Blood."

Till then, dear Mother, help us to be patient, and help us to learn the lessons of the valley, remembering that they will never be learned at all if they are not learned here.

Colloquy. The *Salve Regina.*

Dei Genitrix, intercede pro nobis.

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